

American 'spy' expelled from Germany

BONN (AFP) — An American diplomat has been asked to leave Germany for attempted espionage, the weekly news magazine Der Spiegel reported in its Monday edition. The diplomat had tried to recruit a high-ranking official in Germany's economic ministry to provide information on high-technology projects, the magazine said. The German official informed the federal office for the protection of the constitution (BfV), which demanded the American leave the country, Der Spiegel said. Neither the American embassy nor the German interior ministry were immediately contactable Saturday to comment on the report. Der Spiegel's article said because Germany and the United States had good relations, the incident was resolved between the respective intelligence services without a formal complaint to the American embassy, nor officially declaring the diplomat persona non grata in Germany.

Jordan Times

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Jordan, Palestinians assail U.S. veto of Jerusalem resolution

Kabariti calls on U.S. to affirm no retreat on its traditional stand on Jerusalem

Arafat rejects Israeli plan to withdraw from West Bank areas as inadequate

Jordan, PNA pledge strengthened coordination to remove all obstacles in peace process

PALESTINIAN LEADER Yasser Arafat chastised the United States Saturday for vetoing a U.N. resolution critical of Israel's plans to build a new Jewish settlement in Arab East Jerusalem.

The United States cast the only "no" vote Friday night when the Security Council took up a European-sponsored resolution calling on Israel to "refrain from all actions or measures" that "alter the facts on the ground" or prejudice future talks on the status of Jerusalem. It also urged Israel to abide scrupulously by its obligations under international law.

Mr. Arafat had called for international condemnation of Israel's plans to build the settlement. The American veto put an end to the resolution.

"It is a completely wrong decision because ... the Israelis need a strong discipline from the international community to stop the Jordanian prime minister, Abdul Karim Kabariti, who was visiting Gaza for talks with Mr. Arafat, hinted the veto could hurt America's neutral position as mediator."

"It really calls for ... new American efforts to prove that this veto does not mean some backtracking of the original position of the American administration," said Mr. Kabariti.

"The United States has always said that Jerusalem's status should be determined in the framework of negotiations on the final status of Palestinian territories," he said at a joint press conference with Mr. Arafat in Gaza.

"We are calling on the Americans to prove that their veto does not constitute some form of pullback of their traditional position," Mr. Kabariti said.

After the U.S. veto at the United Nations Friday, Palestinian representative Nasser Al Kidwa said the

Arabs would ask for an emergency meeting of the 125-member U.N. General Assembly, where there is no veto. General Assembly resolutions are not binding.

The vote was 14-1 on the resolution, which was sponsored by Britain, France, Sweden and Portugal. The United States, as one of the council's permanent members, has veto power.

France said Saturday it regretted the U.S. veto.

"We regret that a consensus could not be reached on a resolution which seemed to be a satisfactory compromise and which reiterated in very clear terms a position expressed many times on the settlements," foreign ministry spokesman Jacques Rummelhardt said.

"It is effectively a veto of the peace process, and a green light to Israel to carry on with settlements and facts on the ground," Saeb Erekat, a leading Palestinian peace negotiator, told AFP.

"This proves that the United States treats Israel as a country that is above the law ... this attitude of double standards is a killing blow to the United States' role as sponsor of the peace process and its credibility," he added.

Israel welcomed the U.S. veto.

Foreign Minister David Levy said he "appreciated that the United States used its veto on Friday to block the Europeans' unbalanced resolution."

"The United Nations is not the appropriate place to resolve these disputes," Mr. Levy said in a statement.

At the Gaza press conference, Mr. Arafat also called Israel's decision to pull back troops from a smaller-than-expected area of the West Bank "a deception."

Palestinians had expected to gain three times as much territory in the first of three planned troop pullbacks.

Mr. Arafat flew to

Amman later Saturday to meet with King Hussein. Mr. Arafat said he was to seek the King's advice and "see how he is going to help us overcome this obstacle."

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's cabinet narrowly approved a plan early Friday to withdraw troops from two per cent of West Bank rural areas as part of the U.S.-backed peace accords.

The agreement stipulates a three-phased pullback to conclude by mid-1998. The size of each withdrawal is not defined.

The Palestinians have said they expect to be in control of most of the West Bank by the third stage, while Israeli leaders say they expect to remain in control of half the West Bank at that time.

Final borders will be set in talks on a permanent peace agreement to begin this month and conclude by May 1999.

Israel, with U.S. backing, has said it alone would decide how much land to hand over in each stage.

Mr. Netanyahu, defending himself against hardline critics, said Friday that in the first stage he was giving the Palestinians the smallest amount of land he felt he could get away with.

Israel said it would take a few days before troops are actually redeployed.

Under the plan, seven per cent of the West Bank will be transferred from joint Israeli-Palestinian to full Palestinian control.

Another two per cent now under Israeli occupation will come under joint control. At the moment, the Palestinians have full control over 2.8 per cent and partial control over 24 per cent of the land.

Some 700 students, carrying banners and Palestinian flags, took to the streets in Gaza on Saturday to protest at Israel's settlement policy and at Washington's veto.



His Majesty King Hussein on Saturday receives Palestinian President Yasser Arafat at the Royal Palace (photo by Yousef Allan)

King, Arafat voice determination to face all challenges

Joint committee meeting in Gaza produces agreement to step up cooperation in all areas

AMMAN (J.T.) — His Majesty King Hussein and Palestinian President Yasser Arafat on Saturday emphasised their determination "to confront the negative measures resulting from Israel's latest decision to build a Jewish settlement on Arab East Jerusalem land which constitutes a major obstacle in the path of peace," the Jordan Television said.

The two leaders, who met soon after Mr. Arafat's arrival for a visit, said that the Israeli decision contravenes international legitimacy on which the whole peace process hinges and conflicts with the accords signed between the Israelis

and Palestinians.

Jordan Television said that King Hussein and Mr. Arafat reviewed the developments in the last few days and the "serious situation facing the Palestinian-Israeli negotiations resulting from Israel's escalation of the tension by announcing plans for a Jewish settlement on Jabal Abu Ghneim in Arab East Jerusalem and by closing Palestinian institutions in Arab East Jerusalem."

The two leaders held a closed door meeting followed by an enlarged meeting attended by officials of both sides. At the enlarged meeting, King Hussein and President Arafat reviewed

the latest developments in the peace process and efforts to overcome obstacles obstructing the peace march.

Jordan Television said the two leaders called on Israel to implement the Palestinian-Israeli agreements, adding that King Hussein reaffirmed Jordan's support for the Palestinian National Authority (PNA) and the Palestinian people's legitimate rights. He voiced Jordan's rejection of all attempts to lay obstacles in the path of the peace process and of any change in the status of Jerusalem before the final status negotiations.

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Palestine calls for urgent meeting of General Assembly

UNITED NATIONS (AFP) — The Arab group at the asked General Assembly to call an emergency session after Washington vetoed a resolution criticising Israel for planning new Jewish settlement in Arab East Jerusalem.

The Arab group backed a Palestinian call for the emergency session following U.S. Ambassador Bill Richardson's lone vote opposing a text calling the Israeli decision "illegal" and seeking a freeze on plans to build 6,500 homes on Jabal Abu Ghneim.

The veto was the third such action against a Middle East resolution since the end of the cold war.

On Monday U.S. President Bill Clinton criticised the decision to build in a meeting with Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat. "I would have preferred the decision not have been made because I don't think it builds confidence. I think it builds distrust," he said.

But Mr. Richardson said the proposed text was too much.

"I am sorry to say that this resolution would not help move us forward towards our common goal" of peace, he added. "Accordingly, the United States was obliged to vote against it."

Shortly after the vote on the resolution, Palestine's observer to the United Nations, Nasser Al Kidwa, said the veto would "complicate" the peace process.

"(It) might be misunderstood by the Israelis," he said. "(It) might be considered as some kind of green light for them to proceed with the project."

"In view of the failure of the council to fulfill its obligations, we would request from the members of the United Nations to agree to a meeting of the General Assembly in an emergency session ... and to take the appropriate action in this regard," he said.

Assembly President Razali Ismail of Malaysia told AFP that the special session would likely to take place by Wednesday.

Qatari Ambassador Nasser Bin Hamad Al Khalifa, acting president of the Arab group, took a tough line, calling the Security Council a "dictatorial instrument."

"The General Assembly is the only democratic institution. There, we have an equal chance," he said.

Egypt's ambassador, Nabil Al Ahray, said the resolution backed by Britain, France, Portugal and Sweden was moderate since it did not explicitly condemn Israel.

In fact, he said, the Security Council's reaction was "not commensurate to the gravity of the Israeli decision."

Without explicitly condemning Israel, the resolution demanded that Israel completely abstain from any action that would change the status of land and damage the peace process.

Israel announced Feb. 26 it would begin building the first of 2,500 homes for Jews on Jabal Abu Ghneim neighbourhood of Arab East Jerusalem, sparking an outcry from Palestinians and others.

Five states — Britain, China, France, Russia and the United States — hold veto power in the 15-member U.N. Security Council as permanent members.

But since the fall of the Berlin Wall on Nov. 9, 1989, followed by the collapse of the Soviet Union and of the communist bloc, the permanent members have rarely wielded the veto.

Syria: U.S. should reconsider position after Jerusalem veto

CAIRO (Agencies) — A Syrian official on Saturday called on Washington to reconsider its position after it vetoed a U.N. resolution criticising Israel over its plans to build a Jewish settlement in Arab East Jerusalem.

"The United States must reconsider quickly and before it is too late its position regarding legitimate Arab rights and the Israeli practices which scoff at those rights," said Issa Darwish, Syria's representative to the Arab League.

"The Arab World, at both official and popular levels, has expressed its indignation after the American veto," Mr. Darwish was quoted as saying by Egypt's MENA news agency.

"The United States recognises (U.N.) Resolution 242 which regards East Jerusalem as part of the territories occupied (by Israel) in 1967 and despite that it voted against the European Security Council resolution," said Mr. Darwish, also Syria's ambassador to Egypt.

He accused Washington of ignoring its terms of reference as a co-sponsor of the

peace process, based on the principle of exchanging land for peace.

Syrian President Hafez Al Assad told France's foreign minister on Thursday that Syria wanted to break the impasse in peace talks with Israel but the Israeli government was blocking the resumption of negotiations.

Syrian Foreign Minister Farouk Al Sharra, who attended the meeting between Mr. Assad and French Foreign Minister Herve De Charette, told reporters that Damascus was still hopeful for peace with Israel.

Speaking to reporters at Damascus airport while seeing off Mr. De Charette, Mr. Sharra said:

"President Assad told Mr. De Charette that Syria has a desire to break the deadlock and the dilemma of the peace process but Israel was blocking the resumption of the peace talks."

"The situation in the region is very tense and might explode. Syria does not want that and it is still hopeful that a just and comprehensive peace might be achieved in the region," Mr. Sharra said.

Mr. De Charette also expressed deep concern about the stalemate in the peace negotiations between Syria and Israel and said Paris would continue to work with all parties to find a solution.

He said the gap was still very wide between positions of Syria and Israel.

Syria wants to resume talks with Israel, which broke off a year ago, from the point where they left off with the previous Israeli government while current Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu wants to restart the talks without conditions.

Syria says that Israel's Labour-led government, which was defeated by Mr. Netanyahu, had agreed during sporadic talks launched in 1991 to withdraw fully from the Golan Heights.

"The gap between Syria and Israel is very wide," Mr. De Charette said. "We understand the Syrian position... (but) all those who care about the peace process and the resumption of talks should devote their efforts for peace."

Government officials, others see fresh mandate for Kabariti in King's comments on television

But fewer others have different interpretation on what His Majesty said

By Farida Salfiti
 Special to the Jordan Times

PRIME MINISTER Abdul Karim Kabariti views the comments made by His Majesty King Hussein in an interview with Jordan Television Friday as a renewed voice of confidence and a call on the government to accelerate and expand its reform agenda, sources close to Mr. Kabariti said yesterday.

"The King's comments represent a clear message of support and backing to the prime minister and his team of ministers who have taken their mandate seriously," said a Cabinet minister who is close to Mr. Kabariti.

The comments are also "a message to the prime minister's political rivals that placing obstacles in the face of his programme has to stop," the minister added, citing as examples the King's reference to those parliamentarians who boycott the Lower House and to attacks against the prime minister and his programme by the political elite and in newspaper articles.

"His Majesty's statements calling for widespread changes on the economic, social and political levels, were seen by the prime minister as a call on the government to accelerate its programme of reforms, launched after the King's letter of appointment to the prime minister in February 1996 urging a 'white revolution'."

Ghadeer Taher, Mr. Kabariti's press adviser, told the Jordan Times.

"The prime minister views the King's comments as an important addition to the mandate he was given when he formed his government, providing him with full backing and support," according to Ms. Taher. "We consider



His Majesty's directives as a renewal of confidence in this government's agenda since he is urging the prime minister to speed up the reform process by adopting comprehensive changes in the public sector which would involve profound economic, political and social changes."

The prime minister was unavailable to comment personally on the King's remarks

as he was in Gaza yesterday meeting with PNA President Arafat and participating in talks between the two leaders here in Amman last night.

In the interview aired by JTV's weekly 60-Minutes news programme on Friday, the King made specific mention of his desire to enforce a separation of powers between the executive and legislative branches of government. The need to review regional representation in the Cabinet, its empowerment to act on reforms even before the parliamentary elections are held, tackling the bureaucracy, the cost involved in reforming and reducing it and the performance of the media were also mentioned by His Majesty as parameters that should guide the shape and programme of the new government.

The King emphasised that such sweeping reforms need

to be embarked upon immediately. "We cannot waste a day that we can use to achieve something or to waste an hour or a minute," the King stressed in the interview.

"I talked with the prime minister a few days ago and I told him that if he still has the same enthusiasm, sincerity, courage, integrity and honesty he has been known for... then we will study the issues of the coming stage on a new basis," the King said in the interview.

Informed sources told the Jordan Times yesterday that the prime minister was so encouraged by that meeting with the King that he staked to prepare for a major shake-up most likely to take place in early April after they end an official visit to the United States. Both His Majesty and

(Continued on page 7)

Erbakan warns army against 'fighting Islam'

ANKARA (Agencies) — Islamist Prime Minister Necmettin Erbakan has warned Turkey's pro-secular military against fighting Islam, a right-wing newspaper said Saturday.

"No one has the power to defeat pious people," Mr. Erbakan told a small group of journalists at a Friday dinner, according to the Istanbul daily Yeni Safak. "They tried it here and failed. (former Soviet dictator Josef) Stalin also tried to fight religion and failed," Mr. Erbakan said.

Mr. Erbakan's remarks followed a bitter rift between the prime minister and commanders of the military, defenders of Turkey's secular heritage, over an army plan to curb creeping Islamism.

Following a five-day crisis and under pressure by the army, Mr. Erbakan on Wednesday signed the military plan for a crackdown against pro-Islamic hardliners. But he has given signs of dragging his feet, postponing a key cabinet meeting where the plan's implementation would be discussed until next Thursday.

The army action plan includes a ban on pro-Sharia propaganda on pro-Islamic television and radio, tighter restrictions on religious dress, measures to prevent radicals from entering state administration.

The military also demands strict surveillance of financial organisations controlled by religious fraternities and firm controls on the purchase of pump-action shotguns, the sales of which have surged in recent months, allegedly to Islamists.

A close aide of Mr. Erbakan called in comments published on Friday for general elections to clear up the dispute between the military and Islamist-led government.

"At a time when Turkey is choked, the democratic system is being squeezed and pressure is mounting, we have to go to elections. That is my personal opinion," the Milliyet daily quoted state minister Abdullah Gul as saying. "In a situation like this it is best to go the people," said Mr. Gul, regarded as the architect of Mr. Erbakan's pro-Islamist foreign policy.

He said the military would back down if elections were on the agenda. "When it comes to giving an account to the people the soldiers' attitude will change," he said.

Mr. Erbakan's Welfare Party narrowly won general elections in late 1995 with 21

per cent of the vote on the promise he would raise the profile of Islam in Turkey after 70 years of official secularism.

Welfare formed a coalition with Foreign Minister Tansu Ciller's Conservatives last June after months of political bargaining and an interim government.

Iran to mend fences

President Suleyman Demirel said Saturday that Iranian President Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani would send his foreign minister to Turkey soon as part of efforts to mend recently strained ties between the two neighbours.

"I sent a letter to Rafsanjani, saying our ties should not deteriorate and he responded positively," Mr. Demirel said in a television interview. "Now the Iranian Foreign Minister (Ali Akbar Velayati) will be coming to Turkey for talks," he told the private television channel ATV.

The date of Mr. Velayati's visit to Ankara was not immediately clear.

Turkish-Iranian ties suffered in February following a speech by Iran's ambassador in Ankara, Mohammad Bagheri, at a controversial rally in an Ankara suburb where he expressed support for efforts to bring Islamic law to Turkey.

Turkey asked Iran to withdraw Mr. Bagheri and another Iranian diplomat in Istanbul, who also publicly detested Turkey's secular regime.

Iran retaliated by asking Turkey to pull back its ambassador in Tehran and another diplomat in the western town of Orumieh. Iran's consul general in the eastern town of Erzurum then added further fuel to the fire, denouncing the Turkish military for its moves against Islamists. Ankara declared him persona non grata in late February.

Mr. Erbakan has sought to boost political and economic ties with Iran's Islamic fundamentalist administration at the expense of angering Ankara's closest Western ally, the United States. Washington considers Iran as a main supporter of "terrorism."

Mr. Erbakan's aides signed a multi-billion dollar agreement for Turkey during a visit by the Turkish premier to Tehran in August.

Iran holds 3,200 foreigners on drug offences

TEHRAN (AFP) — Some 3,200 foreigners, mainly Afghans, are imprisoned in Iran for drug offences, as the country intensifies its campaign against narcotics smuggling, an official said Saturday.

Mohammad Zargar, head of a presidential task force against drugs, told a press conference that most of the foreigners had been arrested within the past year.

Many of the smugglers, part of them from African countries, were caught with drugs in their stomachs, as the authorities are suppressing the more traditional ways of narcotics trafficking. He said this "ugly way" of smuggling had led to the transmission of such diseases as AIDS and hepatitis C.

Several addicts had contracted AIDS, said Mr. Fallah, but he refused to give their number.

He put the total amount of drugs seized since the start of the current Iranian year on March 21 at 162 tonnes, most of it opium, Iran is a transit route for drugs coming from Pakistan and Afghanistan destined for Europe.

Full text of resolution vetoed by U.S.

UNITED NATIONS, March 7 (AFP) — Following is the full text of the draft resolution vetoed by Washington Friday in the U.N. Security Council:

The Security Council, having considered the letter dated Feb. 27 1997 from the permanent observer of Palestine on behalf of the members of the League of Arab States,

Expressing deep concern at the decision of the government of Israel to initiate new settlement activities in the Jabal Abu Ghneim area in East Jerusalem,

Expressing concern about other recent measures that encourage or facilitate new settlement activities,

Stressing that such settlements are illegal and a major obstacle to peace, Recalling its resolutions on Jerusalem and other relevant Security Council resolutions,

Confirming that all legislative and administrative measures and actions taken by Israel which purport to alter the status of Jerusalem, including expropriation of land and properties thereon, are invalid and cannot change that status,

Reaffirming its support for the Middle East peace process and all its achievements, including the recent agreement on Hebron,

Concerned about the difficulties facing the Middle East peace process, including the impact these have on the living conditions of the Palestinian people, and

Urging the parties to fulfil their obligations, including under the agreements already reached, having discussed the situation at its meeting on 5 and 6 March 1997,

1. Calls upon the Israeli authorities to refrain from all



U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations Bill Richardson (right) vetoes a Security Council resolution at the U.N. in New York late Friday which called for Israel to abandon plans to build a new Jewish settlement in Arab East Jerusalem (Reuters photo)

actions or measures, including settlement activities, which alter the facts on the ground, preempting the final status negotiations, and have negative implications for the Middle East peace process,

2. Calls upon Israel, the occupying power, to abide scrupulously by its legal obligations and responsibilities under the Geneva Convention relative to the protection of civilians in time of

war of Aug. 12 1949, which is applicable to all the territories occupied by Israel since 1967,

3. Calls upon all parties to continue, in the interests of peace and security, their negotiations within the Middle East peace process on its agreed basis and the timely implementation of the agreements reached,

4. Decides to remain seized of the matter.

Women's plight in Egypt moving from bad to worse

CAIRO (AFP) — The plight of women is getting worse as religious militancy takes a greater hold on Egyptian society, the Centre for Human Rights Legal Aid said in a statement here Saturday to mark World Women's Day.

"We are sorry to say that the situation of Egyptian women is going from bad to worse," the centre said.

It blamed this on several measures including what it said were laws which continue to make distinctions between men and women.

"On the legal front the government and its judicial authorities have failed to take one step aimed at bridging the gap" between the two sexes, the centre said.

It pointed out that "dis-

crimination" continues to be made in favour of men on issues concerning crimes of honour and adultery and noted that women in Egypt need approval from the husbands to travel abroad.

At the same time Egyptian women married to foreigners are still unable to give their nationality to their children although Egyptian men married to foreigners can transfer their citizenship to their offspring.

"Attachment to the (Islamist) thinking remains the major obstacle on the path to modernising laws which concern civil status and families in a way which guarantees equality between men and women," it said.

It also charged that the government was bowing to the fundamentalist religious message "which seeks to limit the women's role to the home" instead of helping them obtain a fair share of the country's economy.

Earlier this year Egypt's mufti sparked a storm of protest when he was quoted as saying that women seeking top government positions would be acting against nature.

But in February Sheikh Nasr Farid Wassel denied these remarks and said: "A woman can occupy all positions of command except the presidency of the republic, which requires special characteristics."

Gamaa 'determined to pursue holy war'

CAIRO (AFP) — Egypt's main armed group, the Gamaa Islamiyah, on Saturday said it was determined to pursue its jihad, or holy war, against "impious" people, a reference to the government of President Hosni Mubarak.

"We are pursuing our jihad until God grants us victory, allow us to set up the caliphate and implement the Islamic message which our enemies are trying to erase," the Gamaa said in a statement received in Cairo by a Western news agency.

The statement, signed by the Gamaa Islamiyah in Egypt, was addressed to the "martyrs of Abu Qurgas and mujahideen of Egypt." On Jan. 25 three members of the Gamaa were killed in a gunfight with security forces in the region of Abu Qurgas, 250 kilometres south of Cairo, in the province of Minya.

The statement did not, however, mention the massacre, claimed by the Gamaa, of nine Christian Coptic youths inside a church in Abu Qurgas on Feb. 12.

The Gamaa Islamiyah has branded as "impious" the Mubarak government and has repeatedly called for toppling it by force.

"We will not stop torturing all the impious" people, warned the group, which has claimed responsibility for a bid to kill Mr. Mubarak in Addis Ababa in June

1995. The undated statement carried a verse from the Koran calling on faithfuls "to fight all the impious people as they fight you" and appealing for "victory or martyrdom."

The group also claimed responsibility for an attack which it said took place recently in the southern province of Qena, where it said its militants killed police officers Anwar Fuad and Alfonso Nassif, a Coptic Christian.

"They paid...with their lives for...the injustice caused to the young faith fighters," the Gamaa said.

A police source in southern Egypt said the officers died when their car overturned on the Qena-Safage road on Feb. 25.

A total of 1,147 people have been killed in Egypt since militants launched an anti-government campaign in March 1992.

'Satanists' exonerated

State prosecutor Hisham Saraya has cleared dozens of youths arrested in Egypt for "Satan worshipping" of committing any clearcut crime, the government daily Al Akhbar reported on Saturday.

"So far no clearcut crime has been committed. The law does not punish ideas no matter what these ideas are," Mr. Saraya told Al Akhbar in an interview.

"But a crime is commit-

ted when ideas are propagated expressing contempt for religions," he added.

Asked if his investigations had proven without doubt that there were "Satan worshippers" in Egypt, the prosecutor said: "Frankly, no. All we have seen so far from the video-cassettes and the tape recordings were simply a show of delinquency on the part of some youths."

Mr. Saraya said that all the 90 suspects in the case had been released, including "24" who were set free on bail and ordered to stay available for further investigation.

On Monday, Egypt's state security court freed on bail the last four of the "Satan worshippers," who were arrested in January and accused of "ideas contemptuous of religion," according to police.

The last suspects had to pay 200 pounds (\$60) in exchange for their freedom but an investigation into "Satan worshipping" continues.

"This affair is not over yet and investigation continues...until we finish completely from listening to all the witnesses and reviewing all the video-cassettes and tapes," Mr. Saraya said.

He acknowledged that the "Satanists" had been blown up by the media which he accused of fuelling "hysteria."

Iran's opposition liberal leader to run in election for Rafsanjani successor

TEHRAN (R) — The leader of a liberal Islamist opposition group will present himself as a candidate in Iran's presidential election in May on a platform advocating more freedom, the Iranian news agency IRNA reported.

It quoted the liberal but tolerated Iran Freedom Movement (IFM) as saying in a statement that its leader, former Foreign Minister Ebrahim Yazdi, would register to run in the election which will choose a successor to President Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani.

The group said it would take part in the May 23 poll "not to seize power but to force the authorities to retreat before the nation and to give way to free activities by independent political parties," the statement said.

Candidates will be screened by the Council of Guardians, or a body of lawyers and Shiite Muslim clerics which in past elections disqualified all but a handful of those who sought to run.

The council rejected Mr. Yazdi's candidacy for parliamentary elections last March along with those of most other

IFM entrants. The group and its allies withdrew from the elections after they were denied permission to hold public meetings.

The announcement brought to nine the number of prospective candidates in the election, in which Mr. Rafsanjani is barred by the constitution from running after serving two consecutive four-year terms. Registration of candidates opens on April 21.

Conservative Parliament Speaker Ali Akbar Nateq-Nouri appears to be the front-running candidate.

Hardline conservative Mohammad Mohammadi Reysahani, a former internal security minister, and former Minister of Culture and Islamic Guidance Mohammad Khatami, who is backed by radical intellectuals, are among others who have announced their candidacy.

Mr. Rafsanjani's centrist backers have yet to announce a candidate in the polls to replace the outgoing president, whose term ends on Aug. 3.

JORDAN TELEVISION

Tel. 773111-19

PROGRAMME TWO

14:05 ...Cartoon — Jonny Quest
14:30 Cartoon — Problem Child
15:00 ...French Programmes
16:00 ...Doc. — Global Family
16:25 ...Energy Express
16:50 Doc. — Our World, Their World
17:00 ...News Flash
17:15 ...All Our Children
18:00 ...French Programmes
19:30 ...News Headlines
19:35 Comedy — Fresh Prince of Bel-Air
20:00 ...Doc. — World Echo
20:30 Medical Drama — Side Effects
21:10 ...Doc. — Tycoons
22:00 ...News in English
22:25 ...Hot Shots
23:00 ...Sisters

PRAYER TIMES

05:02 ...Fajr
06:20 ...Sunrise/Duha
11:50 ...Dhuhr
14:53 ...Asr
17:20 ...Maghreb
18:38 ...Isha

CHURCHES

St. Mary of Nazareth Church
Sweifeh, Tel. 810740
Assemblies of God Church Tel.
632785.
St. Joseph Church Tel. 624590
Church of the Annunciation
Tel. 637440.
De la Salle Church Tel. 661757.

JORDAN TIMES DAILY GUIDE AND CALENDAR

Terra Sancta Church Tel. 622366
Anglican Church Tel. 652826.
Armenian Catholic Church Tel.
771331.
Armenian Orthodox Church
Tel. 775261.
St. Ephraim Church Tel. 771751.
Armenian International Church
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Evangelical Lutheran Church
Tel. 824328.
German-speaking Evangelical
Congregation Tel. 845457
The Latter-Day Saints Tel.
654932.
Church of Nazareth Tel.
675691.
The Evangelical Local Church
in Amman Tel. 811295
English-speaking
Latin Catholics Parish Tel.
614190.

WEATHER

Bulletin supplied by the Department of Meteorology
Temperatures are expected to rise slightly but remaining below average. Skies will be partly cloudy and winds southeasterly moderate to active. In Aqaba, it will be warm, winds northerly moderate to active and seas calm.

Min/Max temp.

Amman ... 06/12
Aqaba ... 11/21
Deserts ... 04/14

USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

NIGHT DUTY

AMMAN:
Dr. Ramzi Mazzawi ... 894788
Dr. Bassam Karadsheh 759200
Dr. Khalid Abdo ... 657129
Dr. Salma Dahoubi ... 776751
Firas pharmacy ... 778336
Ferdows pharmacy ... 661912
Al Asema pharmacy ... 637055
Naboukh pharmacy ... 623672
Al Salam pharmacy ... 636730
Yacoub pharmacy ... 644945
Shmeisani pharmacy ... 637660
Najib pharmacy ... 847632
IRBID:
Dr. Ghazi Ta'ammeh ... 250080
Al Quds pharmacy ... (—)

ZARQA:

Dr. Samir Al Lawzi ... 989601
Khalifeh pharmacy ... 985417

EMERGENCIES

Food Control Centre ... 637111
Civil Defence Department ... 661111

Jordan Valley

10/19

Civil Defence Immediate Rescue

630341
Civil Defence Emergency ... 199
Rescue Police ... 621111, 637777
Fire Brigade ... 617101
Blood Bank ... 775121
Highway Police ... 843402
Traffic Police ... 896390
Public Security Dept. ... 630321
Hotel Complaints ... 605800
Price Complaints ... 661176
Water & Sewage Complaints ... 897467
Amman Municipality Complaints ... 787111

Telephone Information (directory assistance)

121
Overseas Calls ... 010230
Central Amman Telephone ... 623101
Abdali Tel. Repairs ... 661101
Jordan Television ... 773111
Radio Jordan ... 774111
Water Authority ... 680100
J. Electricity Authority ... 815615
Electric Power Co. ... 636381
RJ Flight Information ... 08-53200
Queen Alia Intl. Airport 08-53200

HOSPITALS

AMMAN:
Hussein Medical Centre ... 813813/32
Khalidi Maternity ... 644281/6
Akhlel Maternity ... 642441/2
Jabal Amman Maternity ... 642362
Malhas, J. Amman ... 636140
Palestine, Shmeisani ... 607071

IRBID:

Princess Basma Hospital ... 021275555
Greek Catholic Hospital ... 021272275
Ibn Al Nafes Hospital ... 021247100

AQABA:

Princess Haya Hospital (03)314111

ARRIVALS

department at the Queen Alia International Airport Tel. (08)53200-5, where it should always be verified. Information on other flights can be supplied on phone 08 (52700)

ARRIVALS

Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights
08:15 ...Bombay (RJ)
08:35 ...Jeddah (RJ)
08:50 ...Larnaca (RJ)
09:15 ...Dhahran, Riyadh (RJ)
09:50 ...Dubai, Abu Dhabi (RJ)
10:05 ...Beirut (RJ)
10:15 ...Doha, Bahrain (RJ)
12:10 ...Tel Aviv (add) (RJ)
16:45 New York, Amsterdam (RJ)
17:05 ...Brussels, Paris (RJ)
17:45 ...Madrid, Geneva (RJ)
18:15 ...London (RJ)
18:30 ...Athens (RJ)
19:30 ...Tunis (RJ)
19:40 ...Rome (RJ)
20:10 ...Frankfurt (RJ)
20:10 ...Vienna (RJ)
23:30 ...Aqaba (add) (RJ)
01:10 ...Cairo (RJ)
01:35 ...Marrakesh (add) (RJ)
Other Flights
06:20 ...Tel Aviv (LY)
12:40 ...Bahrain (GF)
15:00 ...Doha (Q7)
15:20 ...Moscow (SU)
20:10 ...Beirut (ME)
20:30 ...Cairo (MS)
23:10 ...Istanbul (TK)
23:50 ...London, Beirut (BA)
01:25 ...Amsterdam, Beirut (KL)

DEPARTURES

Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights
06:20 ...Beirut (RJ)
09:05 ...Aqaba, Vienna (RJ)
09:45 ...Tel Aviv (add) (RJ)
10:20 ...Frankfurt (RJ)
11:00 ...Tunis (RJ)
11:15 ...Rome (RJ)
11:30 Amsterdam, New York (RJ)
12:15 ...London (RJ)
12:20 ...Athens (RJ)
13:10 ...Marrakesh (add) (RJ)
20:10 ...Cairo (RJ)
20:30 ...New Delhi (RJ)
20:30 ...Jeddah (RJ)
21:00 ...Aqaba (add) (RJ)
21:00 ...Dubai, Abu Dhabi (RJ)
21:40 ...Damascus (RJ)
22:10 ...Singapore, Jakarta (RJ)
22:45 ...Bangkok (RJ)
22:45 ...Sanaa (RJ)

Other Flights

06:30 ...London (KL)
07:00 ...Beirut (ME)
07:15 ...Tel Aviv (LY)
07:35 ...Damascus, London (BA)
16:15 ...Doha (Q7)
16:35 ...Moscow (SU)
21:25 ...Cairo (MS)
02:30 ...Amsterdam (KL)
06:00 ...Istanbul (TK)
Royal Wing (RW) Flights

FOR THE TRAVELLER

QUEEN ALIA INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT
This information is supplied by Royal Jordanian (RJ) information

09:50 Aqaba (RW) (departing from Marka Airport)

20:30 ...Aqaba (RW)

HIAZ RAILWAY TRAIN

Dep. Amman ... 8:00 a.m. every Monday
Arr. Damascus ... 5:00 p.m. every Monday
Dep. Damascus ... 7:30 a.m. every Sunday
Arr. Amman ... 5:00 p.m. every Sunday

MARKET PRICES

Upper/lower price in fils per kg.

Apple ... 700/500
Banana ... 600/600
Banana (imported) ... 1000/900
Cabbage ... 100/40
Carrot ... 200/100
Cauliflower ... 300/200
Cucumber (large) ... 240/120
Cucumber (small) ... 360/250
Eggplant ... 200/120
Fava beans ... 700/500
Garlic ... 1150/800
Grape fruit ... 150/100
Lemon ... 310/180
Marrow (large) ... 260/150
Marrow (small) ... 430/250
Onion (green) ... 220/140
Onion (dry) ... 280/180
Orange ... 550/400
Peas ... 900/500
Pepper (hot) ... 400/200
Pepper (sweet) ... 380/240
Potato ... 330/130
Radish ... 120/50
Spinach ... 300/150
String beans ... 750/500
Tomato ... 260/140

Home News

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JBA elections favour Arab nationalists

By Lola Keilani
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — Friday's ten-seat council Jordan Bar Association (JBA) elections favoured Arab nationalists over Islamists by a majority of one member. JBA officials announced yesterday.

The elections, which determined both the president of the JBA as well as council members, were seen as fiercely competitive between Arab nationalists, whose candidate incumbent President Hussein Mjalli was re-elected, and Islamists, whose presidential candidate Saleh Armouti lost.

The results of the first round for the presidency were tabulated as follows: former deputy, Mr. Mjalli received 1,050 votes, followed by independent Islamist Saleh Armouti with 806 votes, in third place came Zuhdi Dissi, seen as close to Fateh — a faction of the PLO — who received 376 votes, while independent candidate Omar Damrah received 72.

A total of 2,342 lawyers voted in the first round.

Messrs. Dissi and Damrah, withdrew from the race in the second round, but as the former did not back a specific candidate upon his withdrawal, Fateh votes were divided amongst both Messrs. Mjalli and Armouti.

Mr. Damrah's supporters backed Mr. Armouti. The results of the second round favoured Mr. Mjalli, who received

1,238 votes, from 2,229 votes cast, while Mr. Armouti received 991 votes, thereby naming Mr. Mjalli as president of the JBA for a second consecutive term and for his fourth time.

In regards to the ten-seat member council, the four Islamists: Ziad Khlefeh, member of the executive council of the Islamic Action Front (IAF), Mohammed Ameen Khawaldeh, Adnan Rashdan and Ahmad Tubeishat, who all ran on the list headed by Mr. Armouti were elected as council members.

The Arab nationalists elected to the council were as follows: Mazen Irshaidat, Jawad Younis, Is'aim Madani, Ali Dumour and Samer Khirfan.

This left one seat for Fateh's elected candidate Shaher Karazoun.

The JBA's new board is expected to meet today to elect the vice-president and appoint heads of the major committees in the association.

An informed JBA source told the Jordan Times that the vice president is widely predicted to be Mr. Younis, the treasurer, incumbent Mazen Irshaidat, head of the companies' committee, Mr. Khawaldeh and head of the professional committee, Mr. Dumour.

Women activists, politicians criticise one-person, one-vote system in seminar

By Rana Hussein
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — Women activists and politicians Saturday strongly criticised the one-person, one-vote system recently passed by Parliament, stating that it will have a negative impact on women in parliamentary life in the upcoming elections.

Deputy Toujan Faisal, who was speaking at a lecture entitled "Democracy Programme for Grassroots," held in conjunction with Women's International Day (March 8), maintained that women will ultimately pay the price for this decision.

"The one-person, one-vote is anti-woman, and I call for forming a Constitutional Court to deal with these issues," Ms. Faisal said.

The deputy also called on women to practise their constitutional rights in electing the candidate of their choice without succumbing to family pressures, "as in the end it will be to their favour."

"Women should be possessed of the awareness to know for whom to vote and whether the candidate for whom they vote will be with them and their issues and not the contrary," she asserted.

"We should be aware, otherwise we will fail as we have failed in the past," she said.

President of the Arab Women's Organisation of Jordan (AWOJ) Emily Nafa' also criticised the one-person, one vote system, which, she opined, weakens women's chances of participating in parliamentary life.

Ms. Nafa' further stated that women's participation in the decision-making process should be obligatory.

"Without women's participation in decision-making positions, they can never achieve goals, which include political participation and equality," Ms. Nafa' stressed.

She added that her organisation, along with other women's organisations, has formed a coalition to increase the presence of women in Parliament by 20 per cent.

Minister of Social Development Hammad Abu Jamous addressed the gathering, stating that the era when women were kept at home has ended.

"This ended with women strongly challenging all obstacles facing them and they became partners to men," Mr. Abu Jamous said.

The minister added that women have proven themselves in social and political life, and "they even topped their male counterparts in some fields."

Ena Rocka Cortez, who was delivering a speech on behalf of Yves Gazzo, head of the delegation of the European Commission in Jordan, said that one of the main priorities of the European Union (EU) in 1997 is to improve the status of women and challenge all forms of sexism.

Moreover, Ms. Rocka enumerated another aim as strengthening women's presence in the political and civil life.

Canadian Ambassador to Jordan Michael Molloy also addressed the gathering and said that women's participation in social development is the key to the success of any society.

He added that one of the main priorities of the Canadian government is to promote democracy by encouraging indigenous countries to support and educate girls and by creating job opportunities for them.

Mr. Molloy affirmed that

Canada currently supports programmes of 12 Jordanian societies and centres concerning the upcoming elections while supporting and encouraging women to participate in elections, regardless of political, religious or philosophical beliefs.

"What is important is to have women participate in parliamentary life in big numbers," Mr. Molloy said.

The event, held at the Amra Hotel, was organised by the AWOJ in cooperation with the MEDA Democracy Programme, funded by the European Commission and the Canadian Embassy in Amman.

In this project, the AWOJ intends to combat gender discrimination.

It also aims at a greater understanding of democracy and women's involvement in the decision-making process, women's political empowerment, training women candidates to participate in general elections, disseminate information and support gender-sensitive issues.

The MEDA Democracy programme was set up in 1996 on the initiative of the European Parliament, following the Euro-Mediterranean Barcelona Conference.

One of its main target groups is, indeed, women and promoting women's integration, respect for women's rights, the promotion of women's participation in political life and civil society.

The programme intends to apply the principles enshrined in the Barcelona Declaration.

Al-Ra'i correspondent Lina Nabil contributed to this report.

Forum stresses importance of economic and fiscal reforms

By Sacha Baggili
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — A two-day forum aimed at disseminating knowledge to the general public through the media regarding economic developments in the Arab World, convened here yesterday.

The forum stressed the importance of economic and fiscal reforms in a world which is quickly moving towards greater economic integration.

The first day of the second Annual Arab Press and Mass Media Forum entitled "Challenges Facing the Arab World in a Global Economy" was organised by the Arab Academy for Banking and Financial Studies (AABFS) in conjunction with the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

During the day, economic experts and Arab government officials presented reports to 55 media representatives from Jordan, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Qatar, Palestine and various Arab news agencies.

In his opening address to the forum, held under the auspices of Prime Minister Abdul Karim Kabariti, President of the AABFS Dr. Mustafa Hodeib highlighted the current status of the world economy as encompassing an "advanced world, a transitional world (the former Soviet Union) and the developing world."

He stated that the economy of the Arab World falls largely under the latter category but stressed that despite differences, the governments of every nation are currently facing challenges due to the "new global order."

Focusing on the specific experiences of Jordan in its endeavours to liberalise its economy in conjunction with the "new global order," Minister of Finance Marwan Awad referred to government efforts to shift public sector resources to the private sector, as agreed on with the World Bank, currently aiding the restructuring of the Kingdom's economy, by implementing generous tax incentives, streamlining investment

procedures and expanding its free-zone system.

He said that Jordan is intensifying negotiations to join the World Trade Organisation (WTO) and expects these negotiations to conclude favourably by the end of 1998 or early 1999.

Mr. Awad, deputising for the prime minister at the opening session of the AABFS forum, said that Jordan's economic restructuring programme, which was implemented as suggested by the IMF, has succeeded in addressing the imbalance in the national economy.

According to Mr. Awad, in 1996, Jordan witnessed an increase of 5.2% in its gross domestic product (GDP), a drop in the deficit of the fiscal budget from 22% in 1989 to 4.6 % in 1996. He also pointed to "a sharp drop in inflation rates from 18% in 1989 to 5% in 1996."

Division Chief to the Middle Eastern Department of the IMF Sena Eken, praised the success of the Kingdom's economic restructuring programme, but paralleled Mr. Awad's lament that "despite these successes, Jordan's unemployment figure remains high at 13% and its poverty rate now ranges between 15 - 20%."

She, therefore, urged Middle Eastern governments to ensure the protection of indigent sections of society during this transitional stage of the global economy.

Despite the popular theory of minimal government intervention for the sake of liberalising economies, she maintained that the implementation of social "safety nets" is of paramount importance to the development of the region.

Ms. Eken expressed frustration over economic growth figures in the Middle East "as compared to those of countries in South East Asia," but praised the readiness of many Arab governments to encourage domestic and international investments and sustain development through structural reform.

Other speakers at AABFS

Mass Media Forum, yesterday included Chairman of the Board of Trustees to the AABFS Mohammad Said Nabulsi and Assistant Director to the Middle Eastern Department of the IMF, Karim Nashashibi, who discussed the "role of the IMF in the Arab World."

Chairman to the Jordanian Journalists Association Saif Sharif, emphasised the crucial role of the Arab press and mass media in disclosing facts and following up economic developments that the general public might grasp basic issues relating to the "new economic order."

According to Vice President of the AABFS, which is based in Amman, the academy itself is responsible for disseminating information regarding all regional developments and innovations in banking and finance.

"One of the academy's responsibilities is to simplify current economic trends and theories and adapt them to the Arab environment," he said.

He stated that the academy was established in 1988 under the name Jordan Arab Institute for Banking Studies and became the AABFS in April 1996 under the "umbrella of the Arab League," serving all Arab countries through directors of all Arab banks.

The AABFS provides training and postgraduate studies in banking and finance, conducts research, issues economic and financial journals and books, offers banking and financial consulting services and promotes economic cooperation between Arab countries and the world.

Other issues addressed yesterday by economists and government officials included "Privatisation: The Rationale and the Egyptian Experience," and "The Evolving Role of the State in the Arab Economies," and the forum's programme facilitated open discussions between experts and participating media representatives.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Lawzi receives Italian delegation

AMMAN (Petra) — Senate Speaker Ahmad Lawzi Saturday received an Italian parliamentary delegation with whom he discussed the Middle East peace process and adverse effects of changing the character of Arab East Jerusalem. Mr. Lawzi told the visiting delegation that the peace in which Jordan believes is a just, comprehensive and lasting one for the coming generations. He also said that Islam does not differentiate between people and religion.

3,550 car accidents in February

AMMAN (Petra) — In February, thirty-six people were killed and 1,234 others were injured in 3,550 car accidents in the Kingdom, according to traffic department sources.

Czech group discusses trade

AMMAN (Petra) — Amman Chamber of Commerce President Haidar Murad Saturday received a Czech economic and industrial delegation and reviewed means of promoting trade and economic cooperation between the two countries. The group also discussed holding bilateral exhibitions.

What's Going On

FIFTH THEATRE FESTIVAL

* Play entitled "Media" at the Royal Cultural Centre at 7:00 p.m.

LECTURE

* Lecture by Iraqi art critic May Muzaffar on the works of artist Ziyad Dalloul at Darat Al Funun, Jabal Weibdeh at 6:00 p.m.

EXHIBITIONS

* Works by Paris-based Syrian artist Ziad Dalloul at Darat Al Funun, Jabal Weibdeh, until April 3. Also displaying works by contemporary Arab artists.

* Sculptures by Zaki Sallam at Baladna Art Gallery, Gardens Street (Tel. 687598), until March 15.

Minister unveils five-point plan to improve public administration system

AMMAN (Petra) — Minister of Administrative Development Kamal Naser Saturday opened a workshop regarding the public administration system by stating that the civil service is inadequate and inefficient and he suggested a five-point plan to redress the situation.

The government is functioning through 90 departments, employing 145,000 employees, however many of these employees were given extraneous jobs in government offices over the past decade, the minister stated in his opening address.

Due to the emergence of high unemployment rates in the early 1980's, the government resorted to according people official jobs at a time when it monopolised many public services, the minister said.

"Successive governments had the tendency to fight unemployment through appointing unnecessary employees which caused the public administration system to bloat to such an extent that many employees were not actually given any work,"

he added. "The result has been more employees than we have work for and appointments over the past years have aggravated the situation and impeded its resolution," the minister maintained.

Dr. Naser attributed a poor governmental administration, lack of a database regarding each department's individual requirements and a lack of job descriptions and controls as at fault for poor governmental offices' performance.

"What we have today is a bloated public administration system with excess civil servants who not only delay and obstruct government business but also place a heavy burden on the state treasury," the minister maintained.

He was speaking one week after His Majesty King Hussein instructed the government to scale down the public administration system and improve its performance.

The minister admitted that many government employees had been in the habit of delaying the completion of public business entrusted to them.

He suggested the following measures to deal with the situation:

- Retiring employees in accordance with a set of regulations to be issued by the Council of Ministers.

- Halting any new appointments to government offices.

- Implementing a mechanism to facilitate the process of retiring employees after they have served for 15 years.

- Creating an information centre to gather accurate data regarding public administration.

- Decentralising authority to local administrations.

Dr. Naser also suggested that the government and Parliament introduce amendments to current Civil Service Commission regulations to deal with administrative problems, while cancelling some government ministries and converting them into departments affiliated to other ministries.

Young man drowns in rain pool

SOUTHERN JORDAN VALLEY (Petra) — The Civil Defence Department (CDD) Saturday reported that one of its teams on Friday recovered the body of a 22-year old man who drowned in a rain pool in the Mujib district near Karak.

Karak Governorate CDD Director Ibrahim Saraireh said that the victim, identified as Jamal Mohammad Munes from the Hittin Camp in the Amman Governorate, drowned shortly after jumping in the pools.

The victim had been vacationing with 10 friends. He said that people often do not heed CDD warning signs about swimming in such waters, which are often dangerous as they are murky.

He added that rescue attempts often fail due to whirlpool undertow.

The CDD team was helped by a Jordan Armed Forces navy unit in retrieving the victim's body. Mr. Saraireh said, adding that on Friday's incident was the fourth of its kind at the same spot in the past two years.

In the Jordan Valley Friday, a 10-year-old child also drowned in the King Abdullah Canal, official reports said.

Rajab Hassan, was playing beside the canal when his foot slipped and he fell in the water.

Also Saturday, the CDD reported that they dealt with 700 accidents in the past week, including 50 fires.

Woman dies in blaze at home

By Rana Hussein
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — A woman died Saturday in a fire in her Madaba home, Civil Defence Department (CDD) officials said.

Rula Issa, 55, was found burned beyond recognition, a CDD official said, adding that the victim's husband Mahmoud Abu Rajoub suffered from burns to his hands and was listed in fair condition.

The official said that the fire was attributed to gas leakage.

The incident, in the Hawouz neighbourhood

occurred around 9:30 a.m., the official said, adding that the entire house was in flames.

"The gas heater hose was worn and leaking gas while the heater was turned on. It ignited and the blaze spread in the house," the CDD official said.

First Lieutenant Aref Batayneh of the CDD's Preventive Awareness Department urged people to follow safety procedures when dealing with portable heaters.

"Unfortunately such accidents occur weekly, causing death and injury

to many," Lieut. Batayneh said.

He told the Jordan Times that gas heater owners should always check hoses connecting the gas cylinder to the heater and replace them once they begin to show signs of wear.

In addition, he added, it is essential to use the original parts which should be placed on the gas heater, such as the piece of leather which prevents the gas from leaking and replacing the original gas regulator.

Jordan, Lebanon resolve trade dilemma

AMMAN (J.T.) — Jordan and Lebanon Saturday announced the resolution of a trade dilemma which delayed the arrival of Jordanian vegetables in Lebanese markets and the marketing of Lebanese apples and oranges in Jordanian markets.

Lebanese Minister of Agriculture Shawqi Fakhouri said that all refrigerated trucks carrying Jordanian vegetables, particularly tomatoes, were permitted to enter Lebanon as of Friday night following a delay of several days.

Director of the Agricultural Marketing Organisation (AMO) Salem Lawzi affirmed that refrigerated trucks carrying Lebanese apples and oranges were allowed entry into Jordan Saturday.

The problem was solved Saturday through telephone contacts between Dr. Lawzi and Mr. Fakhouri who concurred that Jordan and Lebanon shared an obligation to implement the agricultural calendar which has been in force for the past years.

Minister of Agriculture Mustafa

Shneikat announced Wednesday that Jordan had barred 15 Lebanese refrigerated trucks from entering the Kingdom in reaction to a Lebanese ban on trucks carrying Jordanian produce.

Dr. Lawzi told the Jordan Times that Jordan exports vegetables to Lebanon during the winter as well as melons in the summer in exchange for oranges, apples and cherries as stipulated by the agricultural calendar.

The temporary ban on Jordanian agricultural products was motivated by full Lebanese markets, due to a relatively warm winter in Lebanon this year, enabling that country's farmers to increase their output.

Dr. Lawzi urged farmers to export only high-quality well-graded and packed produce.

He said that only high-quality produce is accepted by markets abroad.

Zairean rebels reject U.N. call for ceasefire

GOMA, Zaire (Agencies) — Zairean rebels, led by Laurent-Désiré Kabila, Saturday rejected calls by the United Nations for a ceasefire, saying it could only be called after talks with Kinshasa.

"A ceasefire must be negotiated. We must start to negotiate to bring about a ceasefire," rebel spokesman Raphael Ghenda told AFP.

Mr. Ghenda said that so far there had been no "direct communication" with the Zairean authorities.

"We are still in the early stages," he added.

Kinshasa accepted the U.N. plan Wednesday, as the Tutsi rebels pressed towards the government stronghold of Kisangani.

Mr. Ghenda also ruled out three-party talks, requested by radical opposition leader Etienne Tshisekedi, saying the parties involved in the conflict were President Mobutu Sese Seko, his mercenaries and the rebel alliance of Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Congo/Zaire.

Mr. Tshisekedi has said he would "extend his hand" to rebel leader Kabila, stating that "the problems of the country must be resolved by men, people must talk."

An arrest warrant is out for Mr. Kabila, a rebel in the 1960s, who did not benefit from an amnesty in 1990.

The U.N. Security Council Friday called on the rebels in eastern Zaire to "declare publicly" their acceptance of a ceasefire after Kinshasa agreed to a U.N. peace plan.

In a formal statement, adopted by consensus, the 15 Security Council members called on the rebels to agree to the U.N. peace plan which provides for a ceasefire.

The five-point U.N. plan provides for an immediate cessation of hostilities, the withdrawal of foreign forces and mercenaries, negotiations and elections, and the protection of refugees.

The statement also called on "all parties" to allow access for relief workers to refugees and persons displaced by four months of fighting.

The Council, expressing concern about "allegations of violations of international humanitarian law" in the conflict zone, also welcomed the sending of a U.N. fact-finding mission to the area.

Western diplomats said that the U.N. fact-finding mission, which had previously not been announced, would be leaving for Zaire Sunday.

U.N. officials said that the mission would aim to assess the humanitarian needs of the estimated 400,000 mainly Rwandan refugees still in eastern Zaire.

The mission would be staffed by representatives of the U.N. Department of Humanitarian Affairs, the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees, the U.N. Children's Fund, the World Food Programme, and the International Committee of the Red Cross, the U.N. officials said.

Council diplomats said that the formal statement, which

came after U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan appealed earlier in the day to the Council to urge the rebels to agree to a ceasefire, aimed to support the efforts of special envoy Mohammad Sahnoun.

Mr. Sahnoun, the U.N. and Organisation of African Unity representative for the Great Lakes, drew up the five-point peace plan.

Friday's statement did not contain any reference to a multinational force proposed by Mr. Annan in recent days, but Western diplomats say that this option appears to be fading at present.

Washington has notably said that sending a multinational force to eastern Zaire would be premature.

Meanwhile, Uganda Friday denied French accusations it was intervening directly in Zaire to support Zairean rebels fighting to overthrow President Mobutu Sese Seko.

Hope Kivengere, spokeswoman for Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni, told Reuters Uganda had no troops in Zaire and the French allegations were "ridiculous and strange."

French Foreign Minister Hervé De Charette told the newspaper Ouest-France Thursday: "We demand the respect of Zaire's territorial integrity. What must stop are the interventions of its neighbours, particularly Uganda whose activity on Zairean soil is an established fact."

But Mr. De Charette indicated France, which has sought U.N. intervention to stop hostilities in a move that could save Mr. Mobutu's crumbling authority, would not intervene alone in Zaire.

"How can the French speak for Zaire? This is ridiculous and a strange thing for France to do. Anyway, Zaire has not yet informed us that France is now its spokesman," Ms. Kivengere said.

"But all the same they know very well Uganda has no troops in eastern Zaire. We are not there and we have never been there and do not intend to go there."

Ms. Kivengere challenged France to provide proof of the alleged Ugandan involvement in the five-month-old war. Mr. Museveni denied on a visit to Paris last month there were any Ugandan troops in Zaire.

Zaire has also accused Uganda, Rwanda and Burundi of sending troops to back the rebels, who have captured much of eastern Zaire. All three countries and rebels denied the accusations.

Paris believes the key to halting the conflict may lie with Washington which has close ties with Uganda and Rwanda. French analysts said the government believed the United States was trying to edge it out of the last region where France still had influence from its colonial past.

"Zaire must sort out its internal problems and should stop accusing its neighbours of problems it is now facing," Ms. Kivengere said.

State Department, Cohen disagree on Bosnian local election delay

WASHINGTON, (Agencies) — The U.S. State Department and Defence Secretary William Cohen Thursday disagreed over the postponement of municipal elections in Bosnia.

The State Department, which fought hard to keep Bosnia's national elections from being delayed last year, said Thursday it fully supported a decision to postpone municipal polls by two months.

"Of course it's always disappointing when you have to postpone elections, but this is only a two-month postponement and we believe that the postponement will give U.S. a greater chance to have free and fair elections," Department spokesman Nicholas Burns told reporters.

Mr. Cohen, on an overseas trip in Bosnia, sharply criticised the delay, calling it another failure by outside civilian agencies to rejuvenate the war-shattered country.

"I can only say it is disappointing. It will complicate matters," he told a news conference. "I am disappointed with those who are responsible for setting up and acquiring the (election) monitors, the financial resources in order to allow the elections to go forward."

Mr. Cohen added, however, that the election delay would not interrupt the final departure of U.S. forces from Bosnia in mid-1998.

At the State Department, Mr. Burns said that American Robert Frowick, who oversees the election process for the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), concluded

that "because of logistical and technical complexities in conducting the elections, a delay of two months would be prudent and expand the chances these elections would be free and fair."

"We thought carefully about his reasoning and we support him fully in this assessment."

The local polls were originally to be held in September 1996, along with general elections, but were postponed because of widespread election fraud over refugee registration to November 1996 and then to July this year.

Western countries funding the election had been pushing for a further postponement of the vote to allow more time to organise refugee registration and international monitoring.

The 54-member OSCE, Europe's top security body, is in charge of organising the elections, viewed as Bosnia's last chance for reunification after a devastating 43-month war.

Last year, Washington resisted pressure from many Western countries and experts who argued that Bosnia's first post-war national elections should be delayed for many of the same general reasons that the municipal elections are being postponed.

Meanwhile, Tanjug news agency said Friday Yugoslavia will soon ratify a controversial "treaty" with the Serbs of neighbouring Bosnia, whose Muslims have rejected the accord as illegal and unconstitutional.

An official statement quoted by the agency said the

Yugoslav government had drawn up an appropriate bill to be put before the country's parliament as a matter of urgency.

The date of the parliamentary session to ratify the accord between Yugoslavia and the Republika Srpska, the Serb entity governing half of Bosnia, has yet to be fixed.

Yugoslav President Zoran Djindjic and the Serb member of the tripartite Bosnian collective presidency, Momilo Krajisnik, signed the accord on Feb. 28 to create a single market and a cooperation council.

It sparked protests from Bosnia's overall President Alija Izetbegovic and his Muslim Democratic Action Party (SDA), which dominates the national legislature.

Mr. Izetbegovic, the Muslim chairman of the collective presidency, branded the agreement with Belgrade as unconstitutional, saying all such agreements must be signed by the central government.

Ismet Grbo, a spokesman for the SDA, said the Muslim party would refuse to ratify the accord in the Bosnian parliament.

But the speaker of the Bosnian Serb parliament, Dragan Kalinic, said Thursday the Serb assembly would ignore Sarajevo's objections and convene March 15 to approve the accord.

Carl Bildt, the senior international mediator in Bosnia, Wednesday urged Yugoslavia not to ratify the agreement before it has been approved by the Bosnian parliament, where Croats, Muslims and Serbs sit.

Sri Lanka rebel attack claims at least 265

COLOMBO, (R) — At least 200 Tamil Tiger rebels and 65 soldiers were killed when the guerrillas attacked a military camp in the island's east, defence officials said Friday.

Rebel communications monitored by the military indicated that 200 Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) fighters were killed and 120 wounded during Thursday's pre-dawn attack on Vannathivu camp in Batticaloa, about 200 kilometres from Colombo.

The camp was later retaken by government forces.

The clandestine rebel Voice of Tiger radio, monitored in northern Vavuniya town, said Friday that the LTTE had overrun the Vannathivu camp, but it gave no casualty figures.

A Ministry of Defence statement said Friday that 65 soldiers, including two officers, were killed and 35 were wounded when some 800 LTTE fighters attacked the camp.

"Some of those killed are soldiers and policemen who were guarding Batticaloa town when the rebels fired mortars at the town," a military official in the east earlier told Reuters.

A military spokesman in Colombo said there was a possibility there may have been civilian casualties when the LTTE fired mortars at Batticaloa town, but no details were available.

The LTTE is fighting for an independent nation for minority Tamils in this predominantly Sinhalese island's north and east. The civil war began in 1983, and the government says at least 50,000 people have died. The LTTE says the number is higher.

One soldier also died in a rebel attack on the China Bay Air Force Base in eastern Trincomalee district, about 240 kilometres from Colombo.

The rebels suffered many casualties in the three-hour attack, which began at about 11:30 p.m. (1730 GMT) Wednesday, the spokesman said. He said no exact figures were available.



Nabila Benaisa (left) glances at a huge pile of flowers stacked against the wall of her house in memory of her sister Loubna, whose decomposed body was found late Wednesday in a steel trunk. Police have arrested a petrol-pump attendant, a 33-year-old convicted sex offender who lived less than a mile away from the girl in Brussels home (Reuters photo)

Belgium pays respects to 9-year-old paedophile victim

BRUSSELS, (AFP) — Police were put on riot alert as Belgium paid last respects Saturday to Loubna Benaisa, a nine-year-old Moroccan girl murdered by a paedophile in one of a series of child-sex scandals which has revolted the nation and embarrassed authorities.

The funeral service, held in a Brussels mosque, was attended by 20,000 people and broadcast live on all Belgian television channels. Police stood by, watching for any repeat of the violent scenes which gripped Loubna's home town of Ixelles Friday, where rioting youths had protested official bungling in Loubna's murder investigation.

Most mourners, carrying photos of the victim, stood in a park next to the mosque where a giant television screen transmitted the ceremony.

A thousand people were inside, including representatives of Belgium's King Albert II, government ministers, several ambassadors from Arab countries, and family members of other missing children or paedophile victims.

The girl's body was transported to the mosque by a motorcade of nine police cars.

"You have become the child of all the country,"

Loubna's sister, Nabila Benaisa said in tribute.

"One day, you went skipping out of the house. We never imagined that at the corner of the street there was a monster, that a bell awaited you," she continued.

Loubna's body, discovered Wednesday in a garage basement, plunged Belgium once again into the nightmare of paedophile murders which has put authorities under heavy public criticism for having mishandled the investigations.

Loubna was the fifth girl to be found murdered in Belgium in seven months. Patrick Derochette, a mechanic at the garage with a record of paedophilia, was charged Thursday with abducting her on August 5, 1992 and raping her.

Mr. Derochette, who had been charged in 1984 for abusing three boys, admitted to police he had killed the girl and hidden her body in a metal trunk. Le Soir newspaper reported Friday.

Police had initially questioned him when Loubna had disappeared, but then released him without verifying his alibi. Other leads were never checked, leading many to conclude that her captors enjoyed some sort of protection from the police or the judiciary — or

that her case was not given any priority because Loubna was the daughter of Moroccan immigrants.

Loubna's death carries horrifying echoes of the Dutroux scandal which rocked the country last year. The "monster of Charleroi," Marc Dutroux, is currently awaiting trial for the murder of four girls and the abduction of two others.

Like Mr. Derochette, Mr. Dutroux had a record of paedophilia and was known to the police yet it took years before he was linked to the cases of missing children.

Criticising official incompetence in the handling of paedophile or missing-child cases, the father of one of Mr. Dutroux's victims, Pol Marchal, told mourners at the Saturday funeral: "The list of these children is much too long."

Parents of other victims demanded a "settling of accounts."

No address was made by the representatives of the Belgian government, which Friday had promised "appropriate measures" to right the "failure" of the courts in Loubna's case.

After the funeral, Loubna's body was taken to Brussels airport to be flown to Morocco for burial Sunday in Tangiers, the family's native city.

Taleban condemn Russian interference in Afghanistan

KABUL (Agencies) — Afghanistan's Taleban Islamic militia Saturday condemned alleged Russian support for the anti-Taleban opposition forces and blasted Iran for its anti-Taleban propaganda.

"Russian interference is not something secret — they themselves have admitted this," said Mullah Amir Khan Muttaqi, acting minister of culture and information.

Mr. Muttaqi's remarks came in support of an announcement on the Taleban Radio Sariat and a newspaper editorial that Russia, alarmed by the advance of the religious militia, was once again meddling in Afghan affairs.

"They have stated support for the anti-Taleban alliance. This is of course, interference," he added.

Mr. Muttaqi said that in addition to the "improper move" of bringing troops to the Afghan border, Russia, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan had allowed the anti-Taleban alliance to set up bases across the border.

The anti-Taleban alliance consists of the ex-Kabul forces ousted by the religious militia on Sept. 27, in a loose coalition with the ethnic Uzbek fighters of northern warlord General Abdul Rashid Dostum.

Mr. Muttaqi said that former Kabul army boss Ahmad Shah Masood had established an air base in neighbouring Tajikistan from where there were regular military transport flights in and out of Afghanistan.

"Not only an air base but other bases have been provided where military training is given to Masood's men," charged Mr. Muttaqi.

He also added that from these bases "ammunition is sent into Afghanistan" to support the anti-Taleban alliance.

Afghanistan had not and was not interfering in the internal affairs of other countries.

He vowed that external criticism of the Taleban would not weaken the religious militia nor affect their morale.

On the contrary, he said: "We will continue jihad (holy war) till there is complete freedom in Afghanistan."

Meanwhile, a senior Taleban official said Thursday that all Afghans would have the right to choose the future path of their country, but his administration had yet to decide how the public would be represented.

"When peace and security has been established, there will be no problems for everyone to return. When they come back, they will have full rights to take part and give their views on a future government," acting Deputy Foreign Minister Sher Abbas Stanakzai told Reuters.

"But we have not decided on the mechanism, it is before time. Right now we are struggling to bring peace and security. When that has been established, then we will work on the mechanism," said Mr. Stanakzai.

Mr. Stanakzai reiterated that the head of state was Mullah Mohammed Omar, the leader of the Taleban, while a six-man interim ruling council in Kabul ran the nation's day-to-day affairs.

He said it was too early to tell if there would be elections if and when peace had been established. He said the people would have to decide,

Berisha agrees to new vote if rebels lay down arms

TIRANA, (AFP) — Embattled Albanian President Sali Berisha has agreed to meet a rebel demand for elections within 45 days if the rebels lay down their weapons, an OSCE official told AFP here Saturday.

The proposal was immediately rejected by opposition leader Neritan Ceka, president of the Democratic Alliance.

"It is absurd to hold elections so soon under the prevailing circumstances. We want elections to be held in three to six months," Mr. Ceka told AFP.

The official who spoke on condition of anonymity said Mr. Berisha was opposed to forming a coalition government that would include the opposition, a demand made by the opposition.

General elections were only held in Albania in May last year, amid accusations of vote-rigging.

Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) envoy Franz Vranitzky was here Saturday for talks with Mr. Berisha and opposition leaders in a bid to seek a peaceful solution to a seven-week crisis in the country touched off by the collapse of fraudulent investment schemes.

Rebel leaders in the southern town of Vlore earlier Saturday urged their supporters to prepare its defences, fearing an attack from government forces when a deadline for them to surrender their arms runs out early Sunday.

Luftar Petroshati, a senior leader, told a 3,500 strong crowd massed in the town centre: "Let us use these 20 hours to organise ourselves better to defend our city, our streets, our homes, our roads."

Albania's authorities have given anti-government rebels who control a swath of territory in the south of Albania until 6:00 a.m. (0500 GMT) Sunday to surrender weapons seized from army barracks a week ago.

But gun-toting inhabitants of six southern towns — defying a state of emergency in force since Sunday — balked at his request to surrender arms stolen in raids last weekend on military depots, in return for a promise of amnesty.

After several days of near anarchic rebellion, Vlore and other towns in the south controlled by anti-government protesters have begun to organise themselves to bring some order to the chaos.

A total of 28 people have been killed in Vlore in the last week since rebels overran several army weapons depots and seized arms, according to the Albanian Interior Ministry. On Saturday, it said the latest victim was killed Friday in a shootout between "armed bands" that also left two people wounded.

Leaders in Vlore have already issued courier demands to the deadline set by Mr. Berisha before they say they will lay down their weapons. These include setting a date for new elections, appointing a national government of technocrats and withdrawing military forces from surrounding hills.

They also want the reimbursement of millions of dollars lost invested in the savings schemes. The collapse of the so-called Pyramid investment schemes in January first sparked the public unrest which has escalated into a full scale rebellion.

Mr. Berisha came to power in 1992 at the head of his Democratic Party which pushed out the partially reformed Communists, the Socialist Party.

He was reelected for a second term this week. However, despite receiving broad support from the West, his autocratic rule has alienated many in the country, particularly in the south of Albania.

Karen refugees dying in cholera epidemic—Burmese opposition

BANGKOK, (AFP) — A Burmese opposition coalition said Saturday that 15 ethnic Karen refugees had died in a cholera epidemic in camps near the Thai-Burma border because humanitarian aid groups had been denied access.

The National Council of the Union of Burma (NCUB), citing reports from the border received Friday, said the disease had broken out on

March 4 at Htaw Ma Pyo Hta, a few kilometres inside Burma, and a camp just opposite it in Thailand's Ratchaburi province.

Aid workers, Karen and border sources could not immediately be reached for confirmation of the deaths, or of allegations that the Thai army had not permitted access to camps there and in Kanchanaburi province to the north.

On Wednesday, however,

relief workers said nine refugees at Htaw Ma Pyo Hta had died since they fled their homes two weeks ago, mostly from malaria, while the remainder faced a "precarious" medical situation due to the lack of water supplies.

The NCUB appealed to the Thai government to allow access and "to ensure security and assistance to Karen refugee camps in Kanchanaburi."



Emergency personnel manoeuvre an 83 year old man through a flooded street in Cincinnati. The man had to be rescued from his home after getting injured the night before (Reuters photo)

Ohio valley flood spreads; Kentucky town sees worst

LOUISVILLE, Kentucky. (R) — As the worst flooding in three decades spread relentlessly down the Ohio valley Thursday, the residents of one ravaged town were allowed back briefly to see what was left of the homes they fled six days ago.

They came away shaken. "I don't want to go back. I'm going to get out," Sandy Cummings told a radio station after she and other residents of Falmouth, Kentucky, were driven through their mud-caked town to see houses knocked off foundations, collapsed buildings and debris everywhere.

Falmouth, in central Kentucky south of Cincinnati, is one of the hardest-hit areas. Storms that dumped more than a foot of rain on the region last weekend sent the licking river roaring into the countryside. Water rose to rooftop-level in Falmouth in a matter of hours.

Officials Thursday agreed to let worried residents of the town of 2,300 staying in shelters or living with friends and family ride through Falmouth on school buses. They were not allowed to get out and look

around. Hundreds lined up as the buses shuttled people back and forth.

Falmouth remains closed to their return because of gas leaks, collapsing buildings, the fear of disease and a continuing search for missing people. The floodwaters killed four people in Falmouth.

The Ohio River, from the air looking like a mile-wide mud slick smeared between the winter-brown hills that bracket the winding valley from West Virginia to southern Illinois, was still rising at Louisville but began to fall upstream at Cincinnati.

Ohio officials had some good news. They predicted the river would be at a normal level in Cincinnati by Monday — two days earlier than previously forecast.

But the peak water mark was not expected to pass Louisville, a city locked snugly behind a massive flood wall, until Friday.

Smaller towns along the river in several states remained flooded, however, and in western Tennessee more evacuations took place as the Obion and Forked Deer Rivers contin-

ued to rise, fed by rains earlier in the week.

Louisville's towering flood walls will be tested Friday evening with an anticipated crest more than 5 metres above flood stage, the river's highest level since a catastrophic 1964 flood, the national weather service said.

Kentucky's death toll was revised downward to 16 after a previously counted road fatality was declared a murder victim. Weekend storms with tornadoes and floods that hit from Arkansas to West Virginia were blamed for at least 55 deaths since Saturday.

Elsewhere, violent thunderstorms killed two motorists in North Carolina overnight and four New York City schoolchildren were crushed to death when high winds sent a huge maple tree crashing into a van taking them to school.

Hundreds of people were forced to evacuate flooded homes ahead of the cresting Ohio and its tributaries across Kentucky, Ohio and Indiana. Under sunny skies in Cincinnati, the river actually dropped slightly Thursday from its crest of 19.7

metres late Wednesday, which was 3.7 metres above flood stage.

Kentucky, with more miles of river than any other U.S. state except Alaska, added 15 counties to the nine already declared disaster areas. Nearly 900 Kentuckians were in shelters, many after fleeing homes along backed-up creeks and rivers that flow into the Ohio River.

Along the river in Indiana, about 1,000 people were forced out of their homes and even higher river levels were expected in the coming days as the crest flowed downstream.

But at Lawrenceburg, Indiana, a Casino gambling boat floating in the swollen Ohio remained open for business. Its operators engineered a long ramp to allow customers to hit the slot machines and gaming tables.

The Army Corps of Engineers manipulated its system of dams and reservoirs from Ohio to Tennessee to reduce the flow of Ohio River tributaries, lowering the expected crest at Louisville by two metres, corps spokesman Todd Hornback said.

3 top militants killed by Indian troops in Kashmir

SRINAGAR, India. (AFP) — Indian troops shot dead three top militants in a gun-battle in the troubled state of Kashmir overnight, the police said Saturday.

A police spokesman said two separatists belonging to the Hizbul Mujahideen and another militant of Shore-a-Jehad, an Amalgam of five pro-Islamic outfits, were killed in a firefight in Rawalpindi, in the central district of Badgam.

The three — Munsoor Ahmed Khan, the deputy chief of pro-Pakistan Hizbul Mujahideen, his close aide Abdul Majeed and Firdos

Kirmani, the chief spokesman of Shore-a-Jehad — were among the most wanted militants, he said.

"It is a major success as all the three militants were carrying a huge reward on their heads. Automatic rifles, grenades and ammunition were recovered from them," the spokesman said.

Meanwhile, the all party Hurriyat Conference, an umbrella organisation of about a dozen separatist organisations, fighting for self-rule in Kashmir alleged that the three militants were killed in police custody.

"All the three persons

were arrested by the special state task force, interrogated and later killed in cold blood," a spokesman of the conference said.

"We will be protesting against the killings Monday. The custodial killings since the formation of the new government have increased and there is no accountability for the task force."

On Friday, Indian troops shot dead six most-wanted Muslim separatists including a guerrilla leader in Kashmir.

Five guerrillas of the Lashkar-e-Toiba separatist force were killed by Indian

soldiers in Kashmir's frontier Poonch sector.

The troops also shot dead Saifullah, a "divisional commander" of the powerful Hizb Ul Mujahideen in the southern Kashmir town of Anantnag.

Saifullah carried a reward of 300,000 rupees (\$8,570) on his head. He had been evading arrest since 1990.

More than 17,000 people have been killed in the separatist drive since 1989. India accuses Pakistan of arming and training the rebels. Islamabad rejects the charge but gives diplomatic support to the unrest.

Nepali Congress to expel two rebel lawmakers

KATHMANDU. (AFP) — Nepal's largest democratic party, the Nepali Congress (NC) stunned by losing a parliamentary motion of confidence is to expel two rebel MPs who abstained from the vote, party sources said Saturday.

Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba was forced to resign after his government lost Thursday's motion which he had confidently tabled in the lower house of parliament after two of his own party deputies failed to show.

Mr. Deuba was further shocked when the head of one of his coalition partners the Nepal Sadbhavana Party

(NSP) also unexpectedly abstained, a Nepali Congress Party source said.

King Birendra has given parliament until Monday to nominate a new prime minister.

In the vote, the Deuba government polled only 101 compared with the required 103 in the 205-member lower house, despite a whip issued by NC party President Girija Prasad Koirala.

The party's central committee agreed Friday to expel the two rebel MPs, Deepak Jung Shah and Chakra Bahadur Shahi, for disobeying party orders and acting in an irresponsible manner, Nepali Congress Chief Sec-

retary Laxman Prasad Ghimire said.

"By going against the party whip, the two were deemed to have willingly left the party and as such we have decided to inform the speaker of the lower house of parliament to cancel their parliamentary membership," Mr. Ghimire said.

The Kathmandu Post said Friday the home minister had even sent out police to find the two NC lawmakers but that they were "quietly relaxing at the residence of NDP rebel leader Lokendra Bahadur Chand."

NC party activists said the two lawmakers who failed to turn up bore a grudge

against Mr. Deuba charging the premier has failed to provide compensation for the families of those killed in a Maoist campaign in the kingdom's far northwestern hilly districts.

The anti-Maoist Nepal Communist Party-Maoist declared a "people's war" in February last year in the country's remote hilly districts in a bid to overthrow the present multi-party system and replace it with a republic.

In clashes between the ultra-left insurgents and police some 100 people have been killed including the Maoists, innocent civilians and six policemen.

The latest round of peace talks opened in Moscow on Feb. 26. Agreement on military issues was an important precondition for a political settlement to end the conflict in the former Soviet Central Asian Republic.

Mr. Rakhmonov and Opposition leader said Abdullah Nuri signed a peace accord in Moscow on Dec. 23 envisaging the creation of a reconciliation commission and a post-war government.

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Italy confident France will back NATO command deal

ROME, (R) — Italy said after talks with the United States Friday that it was confident France could accept a compromise deal to resolve a row over who should command NATO forces in southern Europe.

Foreign Minister Lamberto Dini, who spoke after talks with visiting U.S. Defence Secretary William Cohen, said a proposal to defer a decision on the command for at least five years had already been accepted by the rest of the alliance.

"We are encouraged by the fact that all other members of NATO would seem to consider this a reasonable approach to the problem," Mr. Dini told a joint news conference with Mr. Cohen.

"We are confident that also France may find it acceptable."

NATO's Southern Command, covering the volatile Mediterranean region and based in the Italian port of Naples, is led by an American admiral.

The divisive debate over France's demand that Washington hand over or share the command with Europe had jeopardised an earlier pledge by Paris that its forces would rejoin NATO's military structure after an absence of more than 30 years.

Mr. Cohen said Washington considered it appropriate to defer the command issue for five, six or seven years and then review the question "without any prejudice."

"We want very much for France to come in to NATO and we hope, by virtue of seeking constructive ways in which we can help bring that about, that that can become a reality," he said.

The United States had until now flatly refused to surrender the command to a European officer, arguing that a preponderance of southern forces are American including the powerful U.S. Sixth Fleet.

First suggestions that a compromise was being discussed emerged during Mr. Cohen's visit to Bonn Tuesday. France said the following day that it was studying proposals to end the dispute.

"There are different formulas on the table and we are examining them with a will to reach an agreement," Foreign Ministry spokesman Jacques Rummelhardt said in Paris.

Mr. Cohen, who has also visited Bosnia during his European tour, was later holding talks with Italian Defence Minister Beniamino Andreatta.

He was then to head for meetings in Brussels with NATO Secretary-General Javier Solana and permanent representatives to the alliance before returning to Washington.

Mr. Dini and Mr. Cohen said their breakfast talks had also dealt with NATO plans to expand into Eastern

Europe, alliance relations with Russia and the situation in the Balkans, including the unrest in Albania.

The United States is leading the alliance campaign for expansion, which faces a crucial moment at a NATO summit in Madrid in July when the first post-cold war invitations to ex-Communist states are to be issued.

Russian President Boris Yeltsin, in his annual state of the nation address Thursday, attacked NATO's plans, calling them an attempt to "squeeze" Russia out of Europe.

Mr. Cohen said negotiations on a NATO charter with Russia, designed to allay Moscow's fears, were proceeding but enlargement by the alliance would go ahead.

"We think that (the charter) is important but we also believe that NATO enlargement must go forward and will go forward," Mr. Cohen said.

China arrests 7 for bombings in Muslim region

BEIJING, (R) — China has arrested seven suspects in bomb attacks that killed nine people and wounded 74 in the restive Muslim region of Xinjiang last week, a pro-Beijing newspaper said Friday.

"Seven suspects have been arrested. They did not have other weapons, just bombs," Hong Kong's Wen Wei Po newspaper said, quoting Wang Lequan, Communist Party boss in Xinjiang.

Officials in the far western region, contacted from Beijing by telephone, declined to comment.

Exiled Uighur nationalists said from the Kazakh capital of Almaty Thursday that Chinese police had arrested at least 20 ethnic Uighurs in Urumqi and Yining near Xinjiang's border with Kazakhstan.

Three bombs planted on buses blew up within minutes of each other in the regional capital Urumqi on Feb. 25 in an apparently coordinated attack that coincided with funeral rites in Beijing for paramount leader Deng Xiaoping.

A fourth bomb failed to explode.

The exiled Uighur nationalists claimed responsibility for the bus bombings and for a similar, previously unreported attack near the Kazakh border Monday.

Mr. Wang, Xinjiang's Communist Party boss, denied any new bomb attacks and said martial law had not been declared following the three blasts in Urumqi, according to the newspaper.

The official Xinjiang Daily said Wednesday an unspecified number of suspects were in custody for having made and planted the bombs, while others were believed to have sold detonators for the explosions.

The Wen Wei Po newspaper also quoted Minister of Public Security Tao Siju as saying all suspects had been arrested and no one was still at large.

That contradicted the Xinjiang Daily, which had said police were hunting for other suspects.

Mr. Tao also said the unrest in Xinjiang was "an adventurous act by a group of young people" while the Xinjiang newspaper called it a "planned and coordinated act of destruction by a terrorist group."

Muslim separatists want to set up an independent "East Turkestan" in Xinjiang, home to many Turkic-speaking people, including the Uighur ethnic minority.

China appeals for calm in North Korean defector crisis

BEIJING, (R) — Chinese Foreign Minister Qian Qichen Friday appealed to north and South Korea for calm in trying to end a diplomatic standoff triggered by the defection of a Pyongyang leader more than three weeks ago.

Hwang Jang-Yop, North Korea's most influential ideological theoretician, has been stranded behind a tight police guard at the South Korean consulate since he sought asylum there on Feb. 12, sparking a three-way diplomatic crisis.

China was still investigating Mr. Hwang's case, Mr. Qian told a news conference in Beijing's Great Hall of the People.

"We hope all sides can take a cool-headed attitude so as to solve this problem as soon as possible," Mr. Qian said. He gave no details of the issues blocking a resolution.

Mr. Hwang's defection has forced China to choose between an old communist ally in North Korea and a new capitalist friend in the South.

Mr. Hwang's case was essentially a matter between the two Koreas, but since it had taken place in Beijing it came under Chinese jurisdiction, Mr. Qian said.

"China right now is conducting its investigation. We will follow international law and common international practice to solve this problem," he said, adding Beijing would take into

account the need to promote peace on the Korean peninsula.

Analysts say Mr. Hwang will likely end up in Seoul but Beijing is anxious to help North Korea save face by being seen to give due consideration to the Stalinist hermit kingdom's concerns.

South Korean officials said no progress had been made in recent days to end the crisis around Mr. Hwang, architect of Pyongyang's ruling ideology of self-reliance.

"There has been no headway," said South Korean embassy spokesman Chang Moon-ik without elaborating.

South Korean officials have said talks over Mr. Hwang's future were disrupted first by the death on Feb. 19 of Chinese paramount leader Deng Xiaoping and later by the annual session of the National People's Congress, or parliament.

Mr. Hwang's defection has placed extra strains on ties between the two Koreas, arch-enemies since the 1950-53 civil war ended in an uneasy ceasefire, but there have been signs that tensions could be easing.

South Korea and the United States — allies who battled joint North Korean and Chinese forces during the civil war — Thursday cancelled joint military exercises in a goodwill gesture to nudge Pyongyang towards peace talks.

Yeltsin snubs parliament, pleases investors by naming Chubais

MOSCOW, (AFP) — The appointment of liberal economist Anatoly Chubais as first deputy prime minister is a challenge to parliament and a sign of President Boris Yeltsin's drive to breathe new life into Russia's sluggish market reforms.

The appointment, announced late Friday, came just a day after Mr. Yeltsin promised that the government's structure and personnel would change, in a state of the nation speech lambasting government "fat cats" for their failure to tackle chronic delays in wage and pension payments.

But Mr. Yeltsin also accused parliament deputies of delaying vital legislation, making an already bad 1997 budget worse and feathering their own nests.

For the Communist and nationalist deputies who dominate the lower house, the State Duma, the appointment of Mr. Chubais is a direct snub, since they have repeatedly demanded his head, charging that he impoverished millions of Russians during mass privatisation.

As Kremlin chief of staff, Mr. Chubais, 41, played an

influential behind-the-scenes role, largely controlling access to the president, but he is best known for masterminding the country's huge privatisation programme from November 1991 to November 1994.

Along with Prime Minister Viktor Chernomyrdin, Mr. Chubais effectively ran the country during Mr. Yeltsin's long absence due to heart problems and pneumonia following his re-election last July.

"The authorities can break the negative trend in the economy and bring order to the country, especially in paying salaries and pensions," Mr. Chubais said after his appointment was announced.

Meanwhile, Communist Party leader Gennady Zyuganov, runner-up to Mr. Yeltsin in the elections, said the appointment "will lead to nothing except more aggravation of the situation in the country."

Duma speaker and Communist Party member Gennady Seleznev also denounced the move as "a challenge to all Russia."

And ultra-nationalist leader Vladimir Zhirinovskiy condemned what he called

This year's Team Spirit war games were called off just hours after a landmark gathering of representatives from Seoul, Pyongyang and Washington in New York that was designed to lead to formal peace talks.

In Beijing, Chinese police armed with assault rifles and backed by armoured personnel carriers maintained their strict cordon around Seoul's consulate in the capital's tree-lined diplomatic quarter.

North Korean officials who kept vigil in the area for the first week after Mr. Hwang's "defection" have since kept a low profile, and South Korea's Chang dismissed reports that some Pyongyang agents had attempted to break into the consulate.

"That is entirely groundless," Mr. Chang said of reports that police had fired shots when North Koreans scaled the wall of a neighbouring compound.

"Nothing happened last week," he said.

A South Korean official Saturday hinted that Beijing and Seoul had agreed that Mr. Hwang should be sent to an unidentified third country before coming to the South.

"The best solution to this issue is to have Hwang flown directly to Seoul, but this is merely our wishful thinking," the unidentified Foreign Ministry official was quoted as saying by Yonhap News Agency.

the reshuffling of the present clique of politicians, like a greasy old pack of cards," Interfax News Agency reported.

However, Moscow stock market traders and the U.S. administration saw Mr. Chubais' appointment as a smart move.

Moscow investment company centre-invest-securities predicted that stocks would take off when markets opened next Tuesday.

In January 1996 the stock market slumped after Mr. Chubais was dismissed as first deputy prime minister.

Mr. Chubais speaks the same free market language as Russia's major creditors in the West.

U.S. State Department spokesman Nicholas Burns described him Friday as "a very talented, tough advocate of Russia's national interests," adding: "We look forward to working with him."

Grigory Yavlinsky, leader of the Yabloko opposition reformist movement, said that at a meeting with him Thursday Mr. Chubais had proposed including Yabloko members in the new government, Moscow Echo radio reported.

Tajik government, rebels agree on military integration

MOSCOW, (AFP) — The Tajik government and Islamic Opposition signed an accord here Saturday aimed at merging rebel units with government troops to form a new national army, the U.N. special envoy to Tajikistan, Gerd-Dietrich Merrem, told reporters.

The accord was signed by Tajik Foreign Minister Talbek Nazarov and Akbar Turajonzadeh, the number two in the Islamic opposition leadership.

Under the accord, the opposition armed forces are to "identify themselves, disarm, regroup and integrate"

with the government forces, Mr. Merrem said.

Mr. Turajonzadeh said the phased disarmament process would be spread over six months, and the new joint armed forces would have "one joint command and one vertical command structure."

"Since we recognise (Tajik President Emomali) Rakhmonov, he will be commander-in-chief of the army," he added.

Both sides still had to sign a separate protocol providing guarantees that the accord would be implemented, and covering the role of

countries sponsoring the peace process.

Russian Foreign Minister Yevgeny Primakov said the military accord was "the main condition which can open the path to a full settlement in Tajikistan."

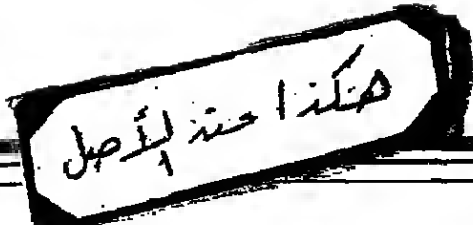
"We all hope to see a prosperous Tajikistan with a happy population in a few years' time," said Mr. Primakov.

Russia has mediated between the warring sides and still has thousands of troops in Tajikistan, helping Mr. Rakhmonov's forces to defend the border with neighbouring Afghanistan, where

Tajik Islamic guerrillas are based.

The latest round of peace talks opened in Moscow on Feb. 26. Agreement on military issues was an important precondition for a political settlement to end the conflict in the former Soviet Central Asian Republic.

Mr. Rakhmonov and Opposition leader said Abdullah Nuri signed a peace accord in Moscow on Dec. 23 envisaging the creation of a reconciliation commission and a post-war government.



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Chairman of the Board of Directors:
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Editor-in-Chief:
GEORGE S. HAWATMEH

Editorial and advertising offices:
Jordan Press Foundation,
University Road, P.O. Box 6710, Amman, Jordan.
Telephones: 684311, 699634
Telex: 21497 ALRAI JO
Facsimile: 696183

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Veto hampers peace

THE U.S. veto of a U.N. Security Council resolution calling on Israel to abandon plans to build a new Jewish settlement in Arab East Jerusalem will, regardless of what the Americans themselves think about it, certainly be seen in Israel as a green light to go ahead with its construction scheme. After 50 state representatives took the floor at the council to condemn the latest Israeli settlement programme, including the U.S. itself, Washington's European allies (including Great Britain, France, Portugal and Sweden) sponsored the draft resolution reflecting the unanimous view of those countries. Against this backdrop all the American rhetoric against the most recent Israeli settlement project in Arab East Jerusalem went down the drain when its representative decided to cast the only negative vote against the draft resolution.

Now that we know what most probably would be the Israeli interpretation of the latest American move, the negative Arab assessment of Washington's vote should come as no surprise to anybody. One obvious construction of the U.S. veto would lend support to the long-held Arab view that Washington may sometimes venture into giving the Arab side some rhetorical solace on Israeli creeping annexation of Arab territories, but when it comes to action, there can be no doubt where it stands. No wonder the U.S. was the sole country involved in the peace process that welcomed the Israeli decision to hand over a mere two per cent of territory to the Palestinian side after a stormy cabinet session in which 10 ministers supported the insignificant Israeli redeployment and seven still saw in it great dangers to their country. Even this net two per cent withdrawal had so many strings attached to it that made the so-called liberated Palestinian areas look more and more like "Swiss cheese." Israel's latest redeployment move was predicated on so many conditions including the continued control of all West Bank arteries as to make the Palestinian areas easy targets for choking by the Israeli military, over and above the fact that Palestinian towns and cities would remain effectively isolated from one another.

If this is a sample of what lies ahead for the second and final redeployment plans, then the Palestinians might as well have low or no expectations from the peace process. With more and more Israeli extremists calling on Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu not to budge any further in the projected second and third redeployment plans from Palestinian areas till the Palestinian National Authority (PNA) renounces any future plans to declare its own independent state, the stage is set for no better than deterioration on the Palestinian track and elsewhere.

ARABIC PRESS COMMENTARIES

IN ITS drive to fight bureaucracy and bring about changes in the public administration system the government needs popular backing and if it succeeds, its popularity will increase and its task will be well appreciated by the public, said Ramadan Rawashdeh, a writer for Al Ra'i Saturday. To partly achieve this goal, said the writer, the government is faced with such questions as smuggling and drug trafficking, an illicit operation conducted by some people with influence within the government circles and with the local communities and badia residents. Government reports in 1996 revealed that large quantities of drugs, as well as cigarettes and weapons, have been smuggled into the country either for sale here or on their way to a neighbouring state, noted the writer. He said during a visit to the headquarters of the border and badia police, King Hussein said that all efforts should be exerted to deal with the drug trafficking and smuggling operations which are conducted by armed gangs. Other questions that face the present government and require urgent solutions include the unauthorised drilling of artesian wells, which depletes underground water resources, and the illegal seizure of and squatting on state-owned lands, the writer said, adding that people with influence are practising these violations. The writer said the Kabarti government is quite capable of dealing with these issues which were never or poorly tackled by all previous governments.

A WRITER for Al Majd weekly criticised the government for its drive to increase Jordan's debts through continually obtaining loans from different sources, ignoring Parliament's clear warning against this practice. Ahmad Nimri said that last week the government signed a deal to purchase 100,000 tonnes of American wheat for \$21 million during 1997 instead of creating incentives to local farmers to produce cereals and ignoring the fact that the national debt has jumped over the \$5,500 million mark. The International Monetary Fund, which is supposed to help Jordan carry out an economic restructuring programme, recently announced that it is lending Jordan \$46.6 million during 1997, raising the fund's debts to Jordan to more than \$231 million, noted the writer. Noting that the 1989 economic crisis, which caused a devaluation of the Jordanian currency and was the reason behind disturbances, had been caused by the country's heavy indebtedness, the writer said the time has come for the government to realise that the policy of continual borrowing is bound to yield similar results. The writer said that Parliament ought to take up this issue and conduct a thorough and in-depth investigation into this very serious problem.

Sunday's Economic Pulse

Winners and losers in Arab free trade area

By Dr. Fahed Fanek

BITTER EXPERIENCES taught us not to take joint Arab projects seriously, be they political or economical. Such projects usually are either empty slogans that evaporate in no time or solemn resolutions, taken at the highest level, only to be filed and shelved with no action or follow up.

We like to believe that the recent decision made within the framework of Arab League to form a pan-Arab free trade area over ten years is an exception and that it will turn out to be a serious decision meant for action and implementation, especially that Arab decision makers were realistic and modest this time and opted for gradual implementation of the project over a reasonable period of time, to allow for adjustment.

I do not have access to the detailed Arab project, if there is one, nor to the timetable of action, if any, to be taken by the committed parties. All I know is that the ambitious project calls for a reduction of customs duty on imports from member states at the rate of 10 per cent a year of the existing rate, so customs will disappear altogether after ten years, when all Arab countries will form one integrated market.

If that is all, we reckon that Jordan, perhaps, did not get a fair deal which secures its interests because the problem in our trade with other Arab countries is not only customs duty but also other non-tariff barriers, such as administrative, technical and regulatory restrictions which are worse than tariffs. The question therefore is whether there will be an agreed programme, with a definite timetable, to remove the non-tariff barriers facing inter-Arab trade.

On the other hand, we have the problem of different economic systems: in some Arab countries, imports and exports are left to businessmen in the private sector who respond to incentives such as the reduction of customs duty for imports from a certain country or group of countries. Jordan is one of them. In other Arab countries, the public sector is responsible for the major part of imports and exports; one example is Syria, where the bureaucrats conducting the business do not care less about saving part of the import duty which is payable by government to government and, accordingly, will not respond to lowering the rates. In such a case, Jordan will obviously be the loser. Another important factor which should be taken into

account is the fact that customs rates vary a lot from one Arab country to another. The ceiling in Jordan is currently 40 per cent while it is only four per cent in the United Arab Emirates (UAE). Five years from now, the Jordanian charge on commodities imported from the UAE will be reduced by 20 per cent of the value, which would give UAE exports a great advantage over foreign products in the Jordanian market. At the same time, the charge on Jordanian products exported to UAE will be reduced by a mere two per cent, which does not make a difference and will not give Jordanian exports a real advantage or a competitive edge over foreign products in the UAE markets.

In order for an Arab free trade area to succeed, it should be reciprocal and equally beneficial to all member states or at least very close to being equal. The system should take into account the differences between the economic regimes of various Arab states. It must establish a fund to compensate the parties that may suffer by losing more revenue and gaining less access to Arab markets, such as Jordan. The rich experience of the European Union must be thoroughly studied and utilised.

Copenhagen Declaration: A watershed for debate on normalisation?

By Sa'eda Kilani

WHEN A number of Arab intellectuals and politicians accepted a Danish Foreign Ministry invitation to Copenhagen to meet Israeli counterparts last month and to issue a joint declaration in favour of working together for peace in the Middle East, they were fully aware of what lay ahead of them after they returned home. They knew that what they were about to discuss and sign would not be received with accolades back in their countries, where anti-normalisation-with-Israel sentiments ran high and deep. Past experiences had shown that participants in similar meetings since and before the Madrid conference were showered with harsh criticism from the left and the right simply for talking to Israelis.

Most of those invited to Copenhagen went anyway in the belief that their quest for peace was more important than their being a target of criticism. Some of them might have even felt or hoped that their participation would this time around succeed in throwing off balance opponents of the so-called "normalisation process."

Maybe they were right. For, judging by the reaction the Copenhagen Declaration has drawn so far, it is evident that most of the criticism (there was praise and support too) centred not on the meeting with the Israelis per se but on what was said during the meeting and what was achieved by it.

In the debate that followed the publication of the Copenhagen Declaration in the national press, columnists, analysts and other writers were more interested in the outcome of the meeting and whether it had met the Palestinian and Arab aspirations. There was little mention and/or criticism of the idea of meeting with Israelis. If we look closely at the campaign of criticism launched against the Copenhagen meeting, we find that it was mostly concentrated on the absence in the document of certain points related to Palestinian rights. Participants were mainly questioned on what was achieved on Jerusalem, settlements and the Palestinians' right of return. Although these three issues were covered in the document, except for the specific mention of the right of return, critics said they were not tackled extensively enough. Others said participants were not given time to shape the declaration, and had to sign something that was drafted by a small, select group of Egyptians and Israelis. Which is, by the way, not true, according to the Jordanians who went to Denmark.

Turning point

This, then, appears to be a turning point in the history of "normalisation" of

relations with Israel. Such kind of criticism as was levied at the Arab participants could be seen as fundamentally different from the attacks Arab "pro-normalisation elements" did and would receive from their opponents not so long ago.

Gone are the days, it seems, when attending an occasion where Israelis were present was considered an act of sacrilege. It was in those days when Adonis, one of the most prominent and progressive Arab writers, was expelled from the Arab Writers Union for taking part in a meeting in Granada (Spain) with Israeli intellectuals. It was soon after the Granada meet took place when he turned down an invitation to come to Jordan. He did not come here because a fierce campaign was launched against him for going to the UNESCO-sponsored gathering in Spain. Anti-normalisation elements had labelled the Lebanese-born Adonis a traitor and a thinker "whose thoughts and ideas would poison the minds of the coming generation" simply because he accepted to sit down and talk to Israelis.

At the time, all other writers and supporters of the Granada meeting were also put on the blacklist by the anti-normalisation elements. Not only that, professional associations in Jordan adopted, shortly afterwards, resolutions banning their members from dealing with Israelis in any shape or form. An engineer or a doctor who participated in a meeting with an Israeli counterpart was threatened with expulsion from the union.

One lawyer, the head of a pro-peace political party, was expelled from the bar association for visiting Israel. A writer's membership was terminated for giving an interview to an Israeli newspaper. Sultan Hattab, now a daily columnist for Al Ra'i daily, fought a long battle with the Jordan Press Association (JPA) because he gave an interview to Israel Television during the Madrid Conference in 1991. It was only after a court ruling that he regained his membership in the JPA of which he had been deprived.

Changing times

Today, it would be practically impossible to call for the political isolation of Adnan Abu Odeh, Jordan's former ambassador to the U.N., for participating in the Denmark meeting. Nor is it conceivable that critics of the Copenhagen document would send threatening letters or launch personal attacks on the participants accusing them of treason, as in fact they did before. It is true that a committee of the Engineers Union has called for the expulsion of member Zeyad Salah for signing the declaration. But it looks as if the union will have to be engaged in a tough, drawn-out battle

to succeed in doing that. Extremist voices who, in the name of intellect and conscience, had lived on terrorising people and accusing them of treason and disloyalty, are losing their forum gradually.

Or so it seems. Critics nowadays seem to favour a more practical approach, more reasonable and constructive criticism.

An outspoken opposition Lower House member, Toujan Faisal, known for her hardline stands against the peace treaty with Israel, recently wrote that the Copenhagen Declaration was a move in the right direction. She described it as a positive outcome "especially that it points to the need to pressure Israel to freeze settlements and rid the region of mass destruction weapons." Ms. Faisal said the Denmark meeting achieved more than the Oslo accords but she challenged participants to implement the document they had signed. Her position would have been unthinkable a year or more ago.

Reasons behind change

Now if this indeed is a change from the past, what did it induce? Might it be the realisation by the "rejectionists" in the Arab countries, Jordan in particular, that, in the final analysis, there is no alternative to peace? Do they now realise the fact that taking up guns and starting a war to restore Palestinian and Arab rights is not on the cards and, anyway, it was never a real possibility?

Some analysts see a relationship between this line of thinking and the evolving dynamics to Israeli politics. Fears and concerns that were ushered in by the coming to power of Benjamin Netanyahu may have helped the realisation, by many Arabs, that unless Israeli peace forces worked from within Israel itself the area will return to war. Since even the most outspoken of the Arab opposition groups are not advocating such war, they might now accept that the Arabs have to talk to Israeli peacekeepers, or at least to those in Israel who seek political accommodation with the Arab World as a way to preempt the Israeli right-wing groups' expansionist programme.

Another factor that might have contributed to this shift is the changing political climate in the Kingdom. For one thing, the Wadi Araba peace treaty removed Israel from the enemy list. This was accompanied by a series of new measures and laws that deprived the rejectionists of tools that they could have easily used to fight those who talked and dealt with the Israelis. So the treaty, while still being opposed by the rejectionists in the name of anti-normalisation, has put a limit to how far they could go in imposing on Jordanian intellectuals,

businessmen and other citizens radical modes of thinking and behaviour.

On the other hand, the opposition has been enjoying relatively more freedom to say what they want on relations with Israel since the present government took office last February. When the opposition wanted to organise an anti-normalisation conference two years ago, it was not allowed. Today, professional associations, opposition figures and political parties find it relatively easy to organise, prepare and lobby against such activities as the Israeli exhibition that was held here two months ago. This, and the two other governments since the treaty was signed, might see differently on why and how this relative openness has developed. But it goes without saying that objective reasons lay behind the change in as far as Israeli relations with Jordan and Jordanians are concerned.

Although the Engineers Union is likely to pursue attempts to expel Mr. Salah, it now appears to be more interested in fighting for its members' rights. The union is currently organising general strikes to protest what it calls the government's unfulfilled promises concerning engineers' salaries and privileges.

For political parties and activists, the election law and the next general elections seem to be far more important at this stage than ties with Israel. The apparent shift in the Islamists' attitudes, in particular, whether towards participation in the government without the latter renouncing the peace treaty with Israel or accepting the existence of the Jewish state without the need for them to deal directly with its officials, can largely explain why the Islamic Action Front (IAF) played down its opposition to the Copenhagen Declaration (by mentioning it almost in passing — without the usual fiery words) after it was adopted.

In any case, Jamil Hamami, a Hamas leader on the West Bank, took part in the Copenhagen meeting, even though he expressed a reservation on the sentence in the declaration concerning Jerusalem. Mr. Hamami's participation is not necessarily an indication of Hamas' shift in position towards Israel. Not that, if it were, the Palestinian Hamas reflects the position of Hamas abroad or the Islamists in Jordan.

A rosy picture of an important change in attitudes towards Arab dialogue with Israelis might have been drawn here, but in the absence of real instruments to measure such shifts we can only rely on analyses and perceptions. In the final analysis, though, the Copenhagen meeting was itself a titmus test whose results the participants themselves will be awaiting.

LETTERS

No selective privatisation

To the Editor:

I WAS privileged to have lived in the U.K. during the Thatcher revolution, at a time when a massive privatisation programme was under way. I believe that privatisation is not merely selling state-owned companies to the private sector. It means much more: it means that air travellers do not only enjoy a better service on British Airways, they also own shares in it; it means that housewives can buy shares in British gas and use their profits to offset their gas bills; it means that telephone users can now get as many telephone lines as they want and also own shares making them feel that they are part of the company. I maintain my conviction that privatisation means more than selling state companies.

Unfortunately, in Jordan privatisation is taking a different course. State-owned companies are turning into privately owned enterprises. The newly established phone company, for example, is becoming more efficient in cutting people's lines than providing a better service. Despite repeated complaints, the Jordan Telecommunication Company (JTC) is still changing telephone numbers without giving people adequate notice. Finding new telephone numbers in west Amman is becoming a full-time job for many people.

As a business owner, I am dreading the trouble I will face if or when my numbers will be changed. On the other hand, the privately owned mobile telephone company, Fast Link, is evidently overloaded with subscribers and it looks like the network is crumbling with users who have no choice but to subscribe to the service. The company's only interest, it seems, is preventing the government from issuing a new licence to another company.

The recent debate, in the Jordan Times, between the JTC and Fast Link was merely one between someone who was making money and someone else who was trying to make more. The words "better service" and "customer satisfaction" were only cosmetically added to the debate.

Meanwhile, the electricity company seems to be following the trend set by the JTC. Apparently, those responsible for cutting the power supply get extra benefits for doing so.

Last week, I walked into my office to find out that the electricity was cut off without previous notice. The employee who did that did not even have the professional sense to ask us to switch off our computers, let alone ask if the bills have been paid. (Our bills had been paid earlier through the bank, but did not register on the computer printout he later presented). That same afternoon my father showed me his newly acquired electricity bill which read: Current meter reading 4,190 units, previous reading 192, consumption 5,200 units. Was that also part of the new efficiency?

On a more personal note, I had a very good business relationship with a newly privatised establishment. To my disbelief, after the establishment was sold under the table to a privately owned company, the new shareholders started to impose their rules on the establishment. Instead of opening up the scope for suppliers to compete, contracts started to be given according to favouritism rather than merit.

Finally, I think that the government should look first at the Jordanian consumer as the "strategic partner" before inviting foreign companies to invest. Privatisation means, I think, mass capitalism and not, as we see it here, selective private ownership.

Amjad Tadros,
Amman.

To clone or not to clone

To the Editor:

THERE HAS been much talk and debate over human cloning. This controversial issue needs to be thought over because many people and scientists are against it. But I look at the issue from a different angle. I think it has to be considered not only on ethical or religious grounds, but also on what it represents as a scientific breakthrough. Since scientists have cloned a variety of plants and animals successfully for decades, then why not humans?

People of the earth should remember that despite the destructive results of the world wars, great technological advancements have occurred because of them.

Let us be realistic and indeed thank the scientists for the new breakthrough.

Ziad Abu Hamdieh,
Amman.

The Jordan Times welcomes letters and contributions from its readers on any subject they wish to tackle. Letters intended for publication, however, should contain the writer's full name and preferably address as well. Names can be withheld only upon request and under special circumstances. Letters are subject to editing. The newspaper is not responsible for the return of unused manuscripts.

Features/News

The weird are among us or the aliens have taken over global media

By Gwynne Dyer

ONE OF the best ways to tell that the aliens are among us is a steep rise in the weird, bizarre and frankly incredible stories in the media. The advance guard of the invaders do not want to tip their hand by using their own communications systems until they control everything, you see, so meanwhile they send each other coded messages through our mass communications.

I finally realised what was going on when I opened my paper at breakfast last week and read the headline: "Banana forced officer to have sex."

Reading on, one discovered that this aggressive fruit was actually former Zimbabwean President Canaan Banana. Banana had allegedly forced his attentions on his aide, Jett Dube, when he was president. Then in 1995, Dube, by now a policeman, shot dead a colleague who teased him about it — and the court that jailed him for 10 years last week acknowledged the extenuating circumstances.

Well, maybe that is the real story, but the aliens' agents are fiendishly subtle. They do not communicate through small ads in the languages of the Lesser Betelgeuse Moons, because that sort of thing inevitably draws attention. Much bet-

ter to fabricate fantastic "news" stories that let them slip in coded messages.

I knew that was their game when I turned the page the same morning and found the story of Mohammad Ali Jinnah and Dracula.

Jinnah was the founder of Pakistan where he is known as the "Quaid-e-Azam" (great leader). He was a much more attractive character than most "great leaders," an urbane, witty, whisky-drinking lawyer who lived most of his life in the cosmopolitan city of Bombay and never set up a single concentration camp. He is not tremendously popular in India, since he brought about the partition of the British raj almost single-handedly in 1947, but he is deeply revered in Pakistan.

So it is understandable that the Pakistani government and private investors are pouring funds into a big-budget movie about Jinnah. It is even understandable that the film will insist that Jinnah gave up alcohol and became a devoutly observant Muslim in the last twelve months (well, all right then, the last twelve minutes) of his life.

But what could have made them cast Christopher Lee in the leading role as Mohammad Ali Jinnah? Lee is a fine character actor, but he is not exactly Pakistani — and his reputation

in the world is founded on playing villains and monsters, from Fu Manchu to Dracula. (Lee's autobiography is titled "Long, Tall and Gruesome").

With a swift slash of Occam's Razor, we get to the heart of the matter. This has not really happened at all. It is just another coded message by the aliens. Like the recent story "revealing" that Pat Boone has turned to heavy metal at the age of 62.

Pat Boone began as the cleanest, most anodyne singer in the United States at the dawn of rock'n'roll, and went on to a long, profoundly unexciting career as a "Christian" entertainer. Now we are supposed to believe that he just released an album called "In A Metal Mood: No More Mr. Nice Guy," and then appeared on the American Music Awards show last month in black leather, fake tattoos, and a metal-studded obedience collar.

That is what the wires say. They even say that a Christian TV network has dropped Boone's weekly show, "Gospel America," as a result. But people who believe that would probably also believe the report from Ghana that at least twelve "sorcerers" were beaten to death last month for making people's penises shrink or vanish. And that medical experts were appearing on Ghanaian television to

explain why penises increase and decrease in size.

That is a moment I am sorry I missed — but of course, it cannot really have happened that way. It is just more alien code. And the evidence goes on piling up: take the story out of Egypt that upper-class Cairo teenagers have been dancing at graveyard raves to heavy-metal bands, and then engaging in satanic rituals. Police say that they have arrested around 300 of the "devil's disciples" and their "confessions" filled the Egyptian press last month.

"We used to dance to heavy metal," Khaled said. "After that we would slaughter a cat or a bird and smear our bodies with the blood. Most of us also got high on drugs and alcohol, and each ritual ended with an orgy." In case anyone missed the message, Tareq added: "We want to be different, to be unconventional. Satan encourages instant enjoyment and permits what religion forbids. We want to imitate foreigners and live in our own way."

These quotes allow only three interpretations. One, that there are actually upper-class teenagers in Egypt stupid enough to talk like that to the authorities and the media (unlikely). Two, that the Egyptian government and/or media have launched a cynical scare

campaign against "foreign" influences (unthinkable). Which leaves three: aliens made it all up.

And my final piece of evidence: Israeli television is now broadcasting a weekly programme called "Hartzufim" in which dolls of Prime Minister Benyamin "Bibi" Netanyahu and Palestinian President Yasser Arafat writhe together beneath rumpled sheets.

During the long, frustrating negotiations over the Israeli pull-out from Hebron, the host would intone each week: "We have here a couple who haven't reached a climax in eight months — despite maintaining full relations." And when the deal was cut, the couple finally made it. "Oh, Bibi, I love those withdrawals of yours," whispered a flushed, feminine Arafat.

There you have it: irrefutable proof that aliens have taken over the global media. If you still doubt it, I invite you to watch for further incredible stories. Within the next month, I predict that normally serious news sources will assert that the Mexican government is trying to crack down on the drug trade, that Russia does not really mind the eastward expansion of NATO, and that John Major has a chance of winning the forthcoming British election.

Full employment is attainable goal — U.N. report

NEW YORK — Full employment is a goal which can be realised without necessarily overheating national economies, according to a report to be presented to the Commission for Social Development when it convenes at the U.N. headquarters from Feb. 25 to March 6.

The report, which was prepared by the secretariat of the International Labour Organisation (ILO), discusses "productive employment and sustainable livelihoods," the priority theme of the commission's upcoming session, according to its multi-year programme of work which addresses the core issues of the 1995 World Summit for Social Development.

According to the report, the people of the world have paid a price for the overriding concern of policy makers with controlling inflation and reducing public deficits, and the relative neglect of measures to combat unemployment. In Western Europe, unemployment is reaching the highest levels since the Great Depression. Resulting pressures threaten to undermine the achievement of greater integration within the European Union (EU) while fuelling persecution of minority groups and immigrants and exacerbating social tensions.

In countries like the United States and Japan,

unemployment is not so severe, but feelings of job insecurity are more prevalent than at any time since the World War II, the report states.

Job creation in developing countries overall is lagging behind an increase in the labour force averaging about 2 per cent per annum, the report notes, adding that such widespread unemployment and underemployment remain primary impediments to poverty eradication.

While rapid economic growth in east and south-east Asia has brought about a high rate of job creation over the past two decades, overall employment growth in Latin America and the Caribbean declined sharply during the 1980s. Limited data available on Africa and West Asia indicate slumping employment opportunities in these regions.

Countries with economies in transition suffered major job losses during the post-1989 period, although employment losses have been moderate in relation to output reduction, says the report. Certainly, improved employment opportunities in countries where employment was once taken for granted will be a key element in maintaining the economic, social and political transformation that is under way, it adds.

Stressing that "high and productive levels of

employment... are fundamental means of combating poverty, of ensuring equity, of meeting peoples' aspirations for participation in economic and social life, and for preserving social cohesion," the report reviews employment policy issues from countries and regions around the world and presents policy recommendations.

Highlights of the findings include the following:

— Economic growth rates need to be pushed higher in order to increase the rate of employment growth;

— Political and social stability are as essential to economic progress as is macroeconomic stability;

— Consensual approaches to income determination can be an additional instrument for increasing employment and stabilising prices;

— The excessive rigours of structural adjustment policies in indebted poor countries need to be moderated;

— In some countries, "a more gradual and selective approach to trade liberalisation may be warranted"; and

— Government action to initiate growth, such as incentives to new investment, is needed to offset shortcomings in pure market mechanisms.

United Nations Information Service

Israeli satirists have fun, breaking 'all ratings records'

Ian Black

TEL AVIV — No one can possibly mistake what Benjamin "Bibi" Netanyahu and Yasser Arafat are up to, humping and sweating under rumpled sheets, and when the talk show host says "we have here a couple who haven't reached a climax in eight months — despite maintaining full relations," it is hard not to laugh.

In the week when the Israeli prime minister and the Palestinian Authority president clinched their long-delayed deal on a pull-back from the West Bank town of Hebron, the punchline is obvious when the writhing couple finally make it: "Oh, Bibi, I adore those withdrawals of yours," a flushed and feminine Arafat whispers to her relieved, manly partner.

It is peak viewing time on Friday night, the start of the Jewish sabbath, and 1.4 million in a population of 5 million are glued to their television screens watching Hartzufim, the local version of Spitting Image, poke vicious fun at ministers, generals and rabbis. In a deeply divided

country with a long tradition of biting political humour, Hartzufim is breaking all ratings records with its irreverent sketches.

Mr. Netanyahu is furious about a regular item which features a troupe of singing and dancing germs who live under the hygiene-obsessed and scandal-prone third wife, Sara. But the Arafat doll, bizarrely, is said to be doing wonders for the Palestinian leader's popularity in Israel.

"The programme makes Arafat look funny, yes; stupid, sure; but at least he comes across as a human being, a clown, not a terrorist," laughs one Arab.

Israeli officials are less amused. The prime minister's senior adviser, a shadowy Russian-born fixer called Avigdor Lieberman, inevitably nicknamed Rasputin, is an attractive target for the latex model-makers with his enormous beight, booming voice and sausage-like fingers.

Sex plays an important role: Limor Livnat, the aggressive minister of communications, was dismayed at being shown in



bed with Mr. Netanyahu (though not at the same time as Arafat), while the opposition Labour Party leader, Shimon Peres —

been on joining a broad-based national unity government that will give him his last chance of power — has been cast as a

promiscuous teenage girl. For many, though, the most memorable sketch in the last few months has been the Arafat doll hold-

ing a man's testicles — "Bibi's balls" — and squeezing hard every time the prime minister declares "no more conces-

apoplexy in religious MPs and fuelled a campaign, orchestrated by Mr. Lieberman, to rein in the

state-run channel that broadcasts it.

Even the many Israelis who criticised Mr. Netanyahu's decision to open the Hasmonaean tunnel in East Jerusalem last September — triggering armed clashes with the Palestinians which nearly killed off the Oslo peace process — were shocked by the Quintet's riposte earlier this month.

It featured a scantily-clad actress breathlessly urging the prime minister: "Enter my tunnel... open it from behind... it's so wet and moist and narrow. Oh, Bibi... Yes..."

Another controversial item had the director Steven Spielberg fulsomely thanking the Nazis' six million Jewish victims as he collected his Oscar for Schindler's List. The team responded to a flood of protests by saying their target was not the Holocaust but its commercialisation. "There are more holy cows in this country than ordinary cows," complained actor Rami Heuerberg.

The Guardian

King and Arafat voice determination

(Continued from page 1)

tations are completed.

The King was briefed on the outcome of a joint Jordanian-Palestinian Higher Committee meeting in Gaza on Saturday. Prime Minister Abdul Karim Kabariti and Arafat deputy Mahmoud Abbas chaired the talks.

President Arafat and Mr. Kabariti, in comments at a joint press conference in Gaza, emphasised Jordanian-Palestinian determination to pursue coordination in the face of all crises and challenges and obstacles lying with the path of the peace process.

Speaking after the conclusion of the meeting of the joint Jordanian-Palestinian Higher Committee, Mr. Kabariti said he conveyed a message to President Arafat from King Hussein underlining Jordan's solidarity with the Palestinian people and leadership.

President Arafat expressed appreciation of Jordan's continued support of the Palestinians, voicing gratitude to King

Hussein for directing the Jordanian government to maintain the strongest possible ties with the Palestinian people.

Mr. Arafat thanked the prime minister for the conclusion of agreements that were signed Saturday by the concerned ministers on both sides.

The agreements covered promoting cooperation in the fields of communications, economy and trade exchanges, higher education, industry, public works, and joint investments.

Before addressing the press conference, Mr. Kabariti and Mr. Abbas, secretary of the Palestinian Liberation Organisation's Executive Committee, signed the minutes of the meeting.

The two sides expressed satisfaction with the level of political coordination between them and affirmed absolute commitment to the peace process to achieve a comprehensive and lasting settlement in the region on the basis of the Madrid peace conference of 1991 and the accords reached

between Arabs and Israelis.

In the minutes, Jordan and Palestine stressed that peace was their sole option and that the implementation of the Israeli-Palestinian accords in full represents the basic foundation for Palestinian-Israeli peace and peace for the whole region.

The two sides said they held identical views concerning the recent Israeli measures which violated the Palestinian-Israeli accords which stipulate that neither side make any changes that would influence the final status negotiations. They also said that the Israeli plan for redeployment following Hebron agreement does not cover more than two per cent of the Palestinian lands, stressing that this contravenes Israel's earlier commitment.

The two sides called on the Israeli government to speed up the redeployment process to cover as much as Palestinian lands as possible.

The two sides reaffirmed their commitment to and support for a joint Arab action

and the revival of the Arab League's role. They agreed to continue efforts to end inter-Arab differences and bring about Arab reconciliation.

They also agreed to call a meeting of the joint committee on the bridges to meet in two weeks to discuss travel and trade across the bridges.

They also called for a mechanism to ensure continued coordination between their respective customs authorities to facilitate the flow of goods across the bridges.

The Jordanian side to the higher committee meetings included the ministers of public works, post and communications. Awqaf and Islamic affairs, planning, education, and transport, in addition to Central Bank of Jordan Governor Ziad Farez, the secretary general of the Ministry of Industry head of the Jordanian representation office in Gaza Ziad Majali and economic adviser at the prime minister's office Basem Awadallah.

Government officials, others see fresh mandate

(Continued from page 1) the prime minister attach such great importance to the visit that it too can be a determining factor in the changes being contemplated, the sources said.

The view that the King's comments constituted a fresh mandate for the prime minister was shared by many politicians, parliamentarians and observers, but not all of them. "The King's comments can be read both ways," said a well-placed source who was quick to add that "they most probably signify a new mandate for the government."

Senator Kamel Abu Jaber, a former foreign minister, echoed this feeling when he said: "I think His Majesty was talking on two levels. On a higher level, he was addressing a prime minister of Jordan, whoever it was, on a chronic problem concerning the real need for achieving reforms. On a second level the King's remarks should be seen as the green light and go-ahead for a new mandate, particularly when he praised the prime minister's courage."

According to Dr. Abu Jaber, the King was giving Prime Minister Kabariti a new mandate, "telling him he will stand behind him and

support every effort in reforming the administration and bringing about, hopefully, the white revolution to the fore again."

Bassam Al Emoush, an Islamist deputy, expressed the conviction that although the King's remarks represented severe criticism of the government, in particular of the social welfare system, this did not signify that there were plans to change the prime minister. Dr. Emoush said that the announcement regarding the King's leaning towards a separation of powers between the executive and legislative branches of government and not allowing parliamentarians from simultaneously holding Cabinet posts was tantamount to preparing the ground for the formation of a new cabinet headed by Mr. Kabariti. Another deputy, who had served in senior Cabinet posts, said he agreed that the King's comments represented a tendency towards renewing the prime minister's mandate.

"The King's statements, it is true, have been subject to diverse interpretations," said the deputy in reference to the TV interview and also to a letter His Majesty had sent a week earlier to the prime minister concerning the bureaucracy. "In

the first letter," the deputy said, "the King voiced his criticism of the government and its excessive bureaucracy regarding the deplorable conditions in which the orphans were found, but in the interview indications were that Prime Minister Kabariti is staying on. This is the essence of the King's comments."

A former senior official, however, told the Jordan Times yesterday that a correct reading of the King's remarks do not lead one to believe that a new mandate has been granted to Mr. Kabariti. "What you had (in the Jordan Times) yesterday was not the correct interpretation of what the King said," the former senior official said. "His Majesty's statement could be read exactly the opposite way of renewing (the prime minister's) mandate."

Dr. Labib Qamhawi, a political activist and former vice president of the Amman-based Arab Organisation for Human Rights, also doubted that His Majesty's remarks could be viewed as a new mandate. "I doubt they can be interpreted as a vote of confidence," he said, explaining that "His Majesty was voicing too many comments for them to be taken that way."

"Looking at all his comments,

however, it seems clear that His Majesty was airing his personal concern over civil life and the state of institutions in the country," said Dr. Qamhawi. "I hope his views would usher in a serious endeavour for this government, or any other one, to launch a 'white revolution'."

"But if this government is embarking on such a revolution, it might be wise to give it another chance," Dr. Qamhawi said, adding that regardless of whether the task will be placed in the hands of Mr. Kabariti or another prime minister, "we need someone to pull it through, particularly with the force of the Monarch behind it, giving added strength to push ahead with reforms quickly."

These differing interpretations were reflected in the diversity of the coverage the King's remarks received in the local daily newspapers. In two of Jordan's three Arabic dailies, no mention of the mandate was made in the headlines. Only Al Aswaq alluded to the issue of a government shake-up in its lead-story headline, but the newspaper did not mention Mr. Kabariti by name. None of the three dailies, however, editorialised on the King's comments concerning political change at the top.

ESCWA report: Arab Gulf countries should boost taxes to balance budget

ABU DHABI (AFP) — Saudi Arabia and its Arab Gulf neighbours should increase taxes to ease reliance on volatile oil export earnings and tackle a persistent budget deficit, a United Nations report said.

The world's biggest oil power and its five partners in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) managed to slash budget deficits in 1996 but this was due to a surge in oil prices, the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) said in its preliminary report for 1996.

ESCWA, grouping the GCC with Iraq and six other Arab countries, said non-oil taxes in the six Gulf states were mostly import duties and accounted for only eight per cent of the gross domestic product (GDP) between 1992 and 1994.

"This is considerably lower than the average of 27 per cent tax revenue to

GDP ratio recorded in middle-income developing countries", to which the oil producing countries belong.

"There is still significant scope, therefore, to eliminate tariff exemptions, expand excise taxes, and introduce a selective tax on luxury goods," the Amman-based group said in its report, obtained by AFP in Abu Dhabi.

"In addition, tax revenues could be increased by expanding the scope and coverage of the current income taxes. Such tax reform policies, however, should be implemented gradually while oil revenues remain relatively high," the ESCWA report added.

The report warned the six members, which control 45 per cent of the world's oil, against raising non-oil taxes sharply and abruptly in response to a "possible significant decline in oil revenues in future."

GCC countries impose limited taxes on companies and banks but do not tax individual income.

Saudi Arabia, cautioned twice by the International Monetary Fund in the past three years over its soaring budget deficit, has raised power and water rates and the prices of domestic flights as part of reforms which also include a gradual removal of heavy government subsidies.

But the kingdom, which produces more than 12 per cent of global crude supplies, fears the imposition of widespread income taxes after such a move triggered mass withdrawals by foreign businessmen in the late 1980s.

Riyadh then retracted that decision, causing shock waves for its GCC partners, who decided against the introduction of large corporate taxes.

Striving to ease pressure on their budgets, GCC states — Saudi Arabia,

Kuwait, Qatar, Bahrain, Oman and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) — have instead introduced more fees on services and the gradual removal of subsidies, with Oman and Kuwait inching towards privatisation.

However, the report notes that the sharp increase in oil prices has "allowed governments to postpone additional reductions in subsidies of various government-supported goods and services."

Most of them have spoken about a balanced budget by the year 2000 but experts doubt that target would be achieved as they are reeling under large domestic debts, heavy defence spending and the temptation to boost actual expenditure when oil prices increase.

ESCWA said an increase of more than \$3 in oil prices was the main reason for the decline in the GCC budget deficits in 1996.

Kuwait facing privatisation obstacles

KUWAIT (R) — Kuwait's planning minister told the English-language Arab Times that the country's privatisation programme was facing major obstacles.

"We are facing major political, social and economic obstacles to privatisation," the Arab Times quoted Ali Al Zmei'a as saying.

"We are currently conducting several studies on the possible social and political impacts of the process," he added in a lecture at Kuwait's Economists Society.

Since 1994 the state has sold stakes in 18 local firms for over \$2 billion under the plan, which also involves

holdings in 36 other firms worth about \$3 billion, officials say.

The later stages will involve the more controversial privatisation of heavily subsidised public services companies that are used to give jobs to Kuwaitis.

"Our economic sectors are not prepared nor are they ready for privatisation," said Mr. Zmei'a, whose country controls 10 per cent of the world's oil reserves.

"Thank God that the World Bank recommendations are neither necessary nor mandatory for Kuwait. Thank God that the World Bank recommendations were not linked

with loans," he added.

Kuwaiti parliamentarians have expressed fear of layoffs and an expected rise in charges by privatised basic services.

The World Bank has recommended Kuwait shed holdings in a wide range of firms and utilities, introduce taxes, cut subsidies and increase charges on state services.

Kuwait, which plans to eliminate its budget deficit by the year 2000, has no outstanding foreign loans. It forecast a 1.21 billion dinar (\$3.96 billion) deficit in the fiscal year which ends on June 30, 1997 on a budget of 4.2 billion dinars.

HOROSCOPE FORECAST FOR SUNDAY, MARCH 9, 1997

By Thomas S. Pierson, Astrologer, Carroll Righter Foundation

ARIES: (March 21 to April 19) Any difficulties which crop up today can be handled easily, however, be sure you use caution. You can make real progress later this evening if you use charm and finesse in handling any situation which could develop.

TAURUS: (April 20 to May 20) If you study periodicals carefully today, you can discover some ways to solve current difficulties. Plan a business trip which can be beneficial to the success of your career activities in the days ahead.

GEMINI: (May 21 to June 21) You'll have an opportunity today to discuss property matters with an expert, so listen carefully. Do something thoughtful for your mate which he or she will be quite appreciative of your kindness.

MOON CHILDREN: (June 22 to July 21) If you are not sure how to handle a private difficulty today, wait until this afternoon when a trusted fellow associate can provide you with good advice. Later this evening will be good for recreational which are enjoyable.

LEO: (July 22 to August 21) Try to spend some quiet time today by yourself thinking about how you can best improve your situation. Put aside until after this evening small chores and please your mate with a thoughtful gesture of affection.

VIRGO: (August 22 to September 22) This afternoon would be a good time to get together with good friends and plan some recreational activities which will be enjoyable. Please your mate more by getting along with his or her friends and thereby avoid any difficulty.

LIBRA: (September 23 to October 22) Be sure you keep your business interests separate from your home life so that there won't be any difficult situation developing. You should not neglect a close relative who is always on your side in any emergency.

SCORPIO: (October 23 to November 21) Treat a new acquaintance whose background is radically different from your own as you would anyone else, and everything will work out well. Later this evening meet with close friends for some fun activities.

SAGITTARIUS: (November 22 to December 21) After handling your usual tasks today, schedule your time and activities for the coming week so that you can be successful in your endeavours. Find a way to improve your home so that it will be comfortable.

CAPRICORN: (December 22 to January 20) Be kind and thoughtful to a fellow associate today with whom you have some issue to resolve. If you go out later this evening, take no risks while driving on the highway and thereby avoid any difficulties.

AQUARIUS: (January 21 to February 19) Try to change your diet somewhat, and get some exercise which will make you feel better in the days ahead. Enjoy the domestic scene with your mate and thereby make your residence a spot of beauty and function.

PISCES: (February 20 to March 20) This is an ideal day today to attend an affair with close friends which your mate has been interested in. Don't do anything to damage your reputation or you could discover that people will scatter like geese.

Birthstone of March: Aquamarine — Jasper.

We're serious about reforms, Egyptian minister tells U.S. investors

NEW YORK (AFP) — Egyptian Foreign Minister Amr Musa has launched a charm offensive against the powerful financial community here to convince investors his country is serious about economic reforms.

"Now is the time to change the face of the Egyptian economy and to link up with the global economy," Mr. Musa told a meeting of bankers and businessmen, adding, "Egypt is open for business."

Mr. Musa arrived in the United States with a retinue of Egyptian businessmen for a two-week tour that includes visits to Houston, Texas, and Washington.

"The confidence of foreign investors continues to lag behind the economic reality," Mr. Musa said.

He stressed his country's commitment to economic liberalisation and privatisation of state enterprises to lure the foreign investment Egypt needs to increase its gross domestic product (GDP) by seven per cent in 2000, from 5.7 per cent last year.

Egypt's economy is currently enjoying a rapid expansion following the imposition of an austerity programme by the International Monetary Fund several years ago.

Inflation was reined in to 5.4 per cent last year, the budget deficit to 1.1 per cent of the GDP and foreign reserves climbed to \$19 billion.

Investor confidence was bolstered in January when credit rating agency Standard and Poor's gave Egypt a satisfactory long-term

credit rating, sparking a rush of foreign income into the country.

Standard and Poor's "has helped raise the profile of Egypt among emerging markets," said Alan Griffith, vice-president of the Bank of New York.

Mr. Griffith said he sees a "new seriousness" in the management of the economy and finds "ample reason to be optimistic about Egypt's future," especially the "growing dynamism of the private sector."

However, some U.S. investors are wary, seeing Egypt's economic spurt as a "bubble," U.S. ambassador to Cairo, Edward Walker noted, citing a lacklustre export performance, the preponderance of labour-intensive industries and the smallness of the middle class.

"Privatisation is moving well through the capital markets, but this process has not yet led to the management changes and reinvestment that is needed for the privatised companies if they are to grow," observed Mr. Walker.

He added "the Egyptian economy is taking on the kind of depth and maturity that is an indicator of long term sustainability."

According to Shafik Gabr, president of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce in Egypt, "the pace of change will quicken in 1997 with new structural reforms" like another reduction in customs duties, fiscal streamlining and increased protection of property rights.

REUTERS • REUTERS •

The Business of Information

Major Currencies & Cross Rates									
Currency	USD	DEM	GBP	CHF	JPY	CAD	ITL	SEK	FRF
US Dollar	1.7172	0.6242	1.4828	121.83	1.3677	1701.90	1.5348	6.7895	
DE Mark	0.6242		0.6332	63.33	1.3677	1701.90	1.5348	6.7895	
GB Sterling	1.4828	2.7530		2.3767	198.23	2.1911	2727.12	3.0997	9.2771
CH Franc	0.6332	0.6332	0.6332		1.3677	1701.90	1.5348	6.7895	
JP Yen	0.0082	1.4086	0.5118	1.2165		1.1221	13.95	168.65	4.7471
CA Dollar	0.7512	0.2268	0.6862	0.9924					
IT Lira	0.0006	1.0080	0.3661	0.0871	1398.01	0.8029		11.35	3.3988
NL Guilder	0.3364	0.3364	0.3364	0.3364	0.3364	0.3364	0.3364	0.3364	0.3364
FR Franc	0.1727	0.2967	0.1078	26.6255	21.03	0.2363	33.42	33.4200	

Energy			Mid-East Currencies				
Oils	Last	Previous	SA Riyal	USD	DEM	GBP	CHF
Brent	19.80	18.85	0.2868	0.4880	0.16844	0.39589	32.5013
WTI	20.50	20.50	0.2770	0.4880	0.16844	0.39589	32.5013
Bony	19.80	19.85	3.2938	5.85611	2.05892	4.88759	401.445
Debit	17.34	17.33	0.3378	0.4880	0.16844	0.39589	32.5013
UL Gas	197.00	185.00	1.946	3.3433	1.2147	2.8877	237.15

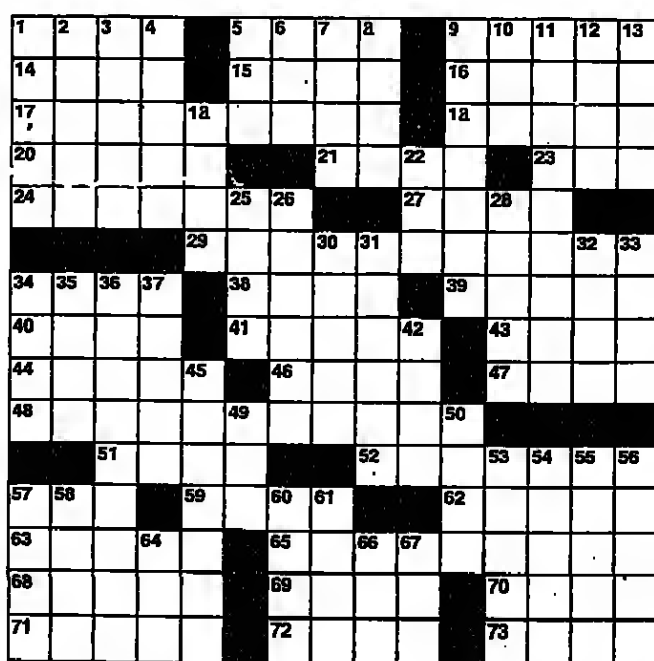
Metal Prices			Currency Deposit Rates (Bid)				
Metal	Bid	Offer	Period	3 -	6 -	9 -	1 -
Gold (oz's)	348.8	349.3	USD	5.31	5.43	5.46	5.74
Silver (oz's)	23.15	23.18	DEM	3.24	3.24	3.24	3.24
Platinum (oz's)	379	380	JPY	0.34	0.34	0.34	0.37
Al (3 Months)	4672	4673	DEM	3.24	3.24	3.24	3.24
Cu (3 Months)	0	2400	FRF	3.21	3.26	3.26	3.32
Zinc (3 Months)	2255	2257	CHF	3.24	3.24	3.24	3.24
Lead (3 Months)	583	584	ITL	7.26	7.21	7.01	6.85
Ni (3 Months)	2300	2300					

Main Equity Indices							
Bourse	Index	Value	Chng	% Chng	High	Low	Pt Ch
New York	DOW JONES	7002.04	57.34	0.83	7004.73	6944.7	6944.7
London	FT-SE 100	4428.25	21	0.48	4432.7	4381.4	4399.3
Paris	CAC 40	2708.28	8.36	0.31	2718.95	2670.38	2698.92
Frankfurt	DAX	3379.2	27	0.81	3384.46	3350.77	3373.7

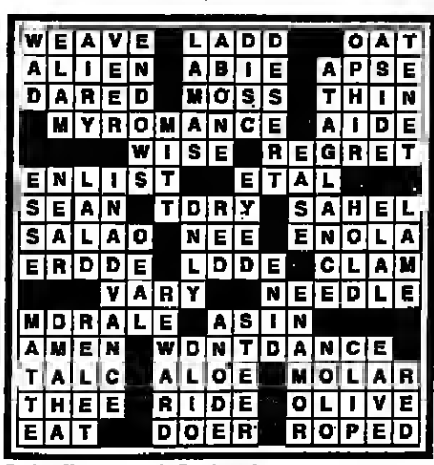
Energy			JOD Cross Rates		
Commodity	Last	Delivery	Currency	Buy	Sell
Coffee (c/lb)	203.92	Spot	US Dollar	0.708	0.710
Sugar (Shon)	310.5	Spot	DE Mark	0.4127	0.4148
Wheat (Shon)	23.62	Spot	FR Franc	0.1223	0.1229
Soya (c/lb)	23.62	Spot	NL Guilder	0.3668	0.3686
Barley (Shon)	0	Spot			
Rice (Shon)	410	Spot			

THE Daily Crossword

- ACROSS
- Ego
 - Church part
 - Movie monster
 - Olive genus
 - Authentic
 - Beethoven's "Fur —"
 - Oz greeters
 - Goddess of the hearth
 - Goodbye
 - Place with lots of bologna
 - Broadcast
 - Some stanzas
 - PDQ kin
 - Randy Newman hit
 - Hindu deified hero
 - Pavarotti solo
 - Fear
 - Winglike
 - Across: pref.
 - Ankle bones
 - Persian fairies
 - Preminger of film
 - "I smell —"
 - Snow White's friends
 - Gen. Robert —
 - Throwback
 - The Sun
 - With mouth agape
 - Jay Silverheels role
 - Frog sound
 - Small auto
 - Perceptive
 - Image
 - All — (attentive)
 - More meen-spirited
 - Office help, e.g.
 - Knife of old



by Randall J. Hartman



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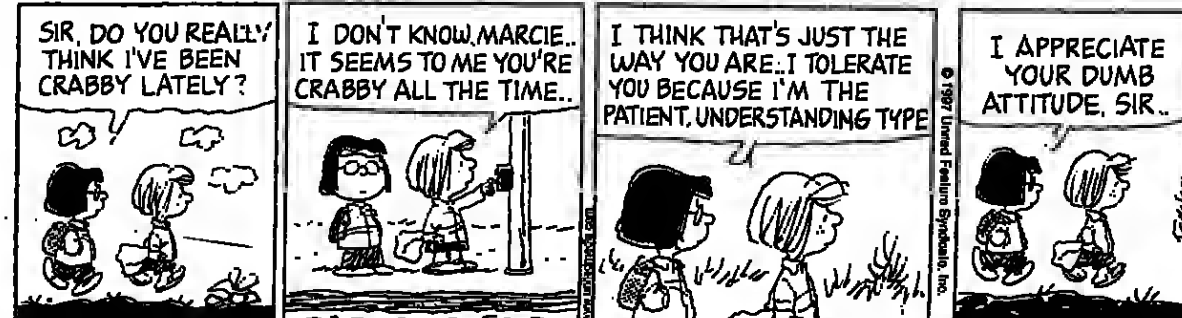
- DOWN
- Bodies of organisms
 - Escape from
 - Certain consonant
 - Gem plane
 - Clumsy vessel

- Noted architect
- Beach cover
- Otherwise
- Corrected
- Comida cheer
- Vanish
- Italian wine center
- Proximate
- Colors
- Once around the track
- The thing there
- Sadness
- Blood carrier
- Gaucho's rope
- Mystical Hindu doctrine
- Tra —
- Redact
- Hits hard
- Nautical term
- First-rate
- "The Tempest" role
- Weak
- Tennis shoe

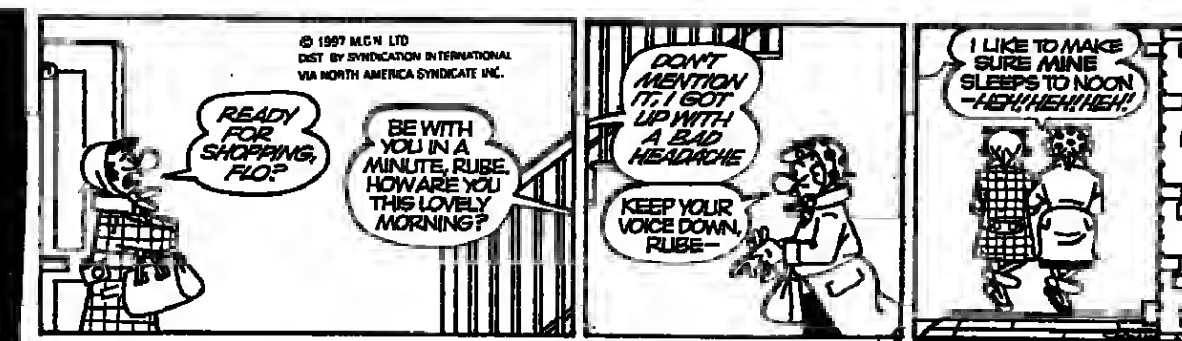
- Striker
- Killer whale
- Give off
- Gambling cubes
- Dined
- DeLuxe
- Econ. indicator

JORDAN TIMES
TEL:
684311-699634

Peanuts



Andy Capp



Mutt'n'Jeff



Business & Finance

Jordan Times, Sunday, March 9, 1997 9

UAE set to approve world's biggest Islamic bank

ABU DHABI (AFP) — the United Arab Emirates (UAE) is set to announce the creation of the world's biggest Islamic bank, a project expected to trigger an investment rush, bankers have said.

The economic weekly Emirates Today reported that creation of the bank would be announced within a few weeks and around 55 per cent of its capital would be covered through local public subscription.

It said the bank would have a capital of three billion dirhams (\$817 million), far higher than any other UAE bank.

"We have a few details of the project as it is awaiting approval by the government. But we know it will be the biggest Islamic bank in the world in terms of paid-up capital," a UAE bank manager said.

In its issue published Saturday, Emirates Today said the institution would be called the Emirates Islamic Bank (EISB) and that the project would probably be endorsed by the federal cabinet this month before an official announcement in April.

It said the central bank had already agreed to the project, adding that the main subscribers would include the government-owned Abu Dhabi Investment Authority (ADIA) and the Abu Dhabi Investment Company.

"It is expected that the capital would be subscribed within days given the huge liquidity in the domestic market," the magazine said. "The bank is also expected to attract large deposits as many local businessmen prefer not to invest in banks which deal in interest."

Islamic banks do not deal in interest which is prohibited in Islam as usury. Their main activities cover financing projects and charging a percentage of the profits as well as trading in property, cars and other items.

The UAE already has one Islamic bank in Dubai, which is the second largest in the world in terms of capital after the Egyptian Faisal Islamic Bank.

Bankers said they believed EISB would not affect the operations of the other 47 commercial banks operating in the oil-rich Gulf country.

Competition heats up for satellite, cable firms in Mideast

By Rana Sabbagh
Reuters

DUBAI — Global and regional satellite and cable operators are battling for a slice of the Middle East's rapidly growing market for free and pay-TV channels, industry executives said Friday.

next few years. But they know their survival in a price-conscious market will be dictated by quality and price.

Both News Corp's NCP-Axstar TV and Showtime are currently boosting their direct-to-home satellite services by adding more channels to their digital platforms.

The regional satellite industry boom has also sparked debate on whether many of the 230 million Arabs inhabiting vast areas of land stretching from North Africa to the oil-rich Gulf need analogue or digital satellite TV technology, they added.

Dubai-based Showtime forecasts that by the end of 1999, its package will attract 170,000-200,000 subscribers in the region.

On Wednesday, it announced the launch of an upmarket channel for women after extensive market research.

In the long-run, most believe digital TV will replace analogue.

Current estimates suggest there are approximately 10 million TV households throughout the Arab World — four million of them in Saudi Arabia and densely populated Egypt.

The industry's concerns were highlighted during the third Middle East International Cable and Satellite Exhibition (Cabsat'97) which opened in Dubai this week.

Showtime is a joint venture between Kuwait investment project company KWPJ and America's entertainment and publishing group Viacom Inc.

"Competition in the market is getting fiercer as everybody wants to be in," Elizabeth Christy, head of corporate communications at the Rome-based satellite television and radio network Orbit, told Reuters in an interview.

Dubai Cable Vision, owned by the United Arab Emirates (UAE) Radio and Television-Dubai, is counting on a package of 10 channels and modest cost to boost sales across the area.

"We are finding our growth to be extremely rapid," since the eight-channel Orbit launched its pay-TV in the Arab World in 1994, she said.

Multi-billion dollar regional projects, especially satellite launches, will also boost the TV satellite industry in the region, the executives said.

"There are no obstacles to our growth...the only obstacle at the outset was a fairly high decoder price and a sort of misunderstanding of what pay television was all about," Ms. Christy added.

The Arab Satellite Organisation (Arabsat), which offers 60 TV and telecommunications channels, is planning to launch the second of its new generation of satellites in early 1997.

Ms. Christy said they planned to hit Morocco and Tunisia by September, two major markets where state broadcasters remain heavily involved in programming and transmission.

Figures on regional market trends, including satellite pay television services, have not been released.

However, major pay-TV broadcasters in the Arab World are expected to increase their market share over the

UAE telecommunications corporation Etisalat is planning to launch two satellites in the coming years and Egypt will launch its "Nilesat" by 1999.

But cable and satellite operators say state interference, especially in conservative countries like Saudi Arabia and Qatar, is hampering growth.

Beat

Municipality of Greater Amman to continue removing billboards

IN IMPLEMENTATION of recent regulations concerning advertising in Amman, the Municipality of Greater Amman (MoGA) will continue to remove ordinary and illuminated billboards placed on main and secondary roads in the Greater Amman area, a MoGA official has said. He indicated that the municipality is currently preparing new specifications for roadside billboards and advertising boards in general, within the MoGA boundaries, based on modern and advanced methods of display and illumination.

According to Al Dustour, the Council of Ministers has recently issued a circular regarding billboards within the MoGA area and demanding that they be removed for marred the landscape, especially the road to the airport and other main streets. To enforce this demand, MoGA issued warnings to the parties concerned to remove their billboards within a specified period or, otherwise, have them removed by MoGA, which will also take legal measures against the concerned advertisers.

The Amman Chamber of Commerce has exerted efforts to have MoGA stop removing the billboards or to postpone the decision for some time but its request fell on deaf ears as the municipality had clear directives to rectify the situation of billboards. The MoGA official emphasised that all billboards, whether illuminated or not, placed on roofs of buildings in addition to those on the roadsides will be removed (Al Dustour).

JEDCO denies having plans to hold Israeli exhibitions

FAROUQ HADIDI, the deputy general manager of the Jordan Export Development and Commercial Centres Corporation (JEDCO) denied that the corporation has a plan to hold three Israeli exhibitions in Amman this year. He indicated that JEDCO was not the authority concerned with giving approvals to hold such exhibitions.

Mr. Hadidi explained that JEDCO does not formulate plans to hold foreign exhibitions in Jordan. "To the contrary, JEDCO organises Jordanian exhibitions abroad to promote the Kingdom's products in outside markets," he emphasised. He also described as untrue the reports that spoke of Israeli companies requesting to rent space at the Amman International Fair, which is affiliated to JEDCO, to hold the exhibitions there.

Meanwhile, informed sources have denied that there is an agreement among the "Taba group" — Egypt, Jordan, Palestine and Israel in addition to the U.S. — to hold a regional food exhibition in Tel Aviv in February 1998. The Israeli ministry of industry and trade Thursday announced that the five countries have agreed to hold the exhibition in Israel next week.

The sources said the Israeli side has repeated a former invitation in this regard during a recent meeting in Amman but the parties concerned did not arrive at an agreement on the subject. The Arab countries stressed during the meeting on the need to link the food exhibition with removal of restrictions on Arab-Palestinian trade (Al Ra'i).

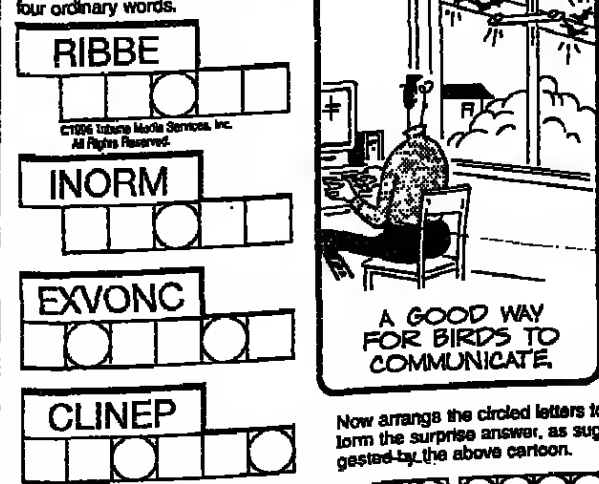
THE BETTER HALF. By Glasbergen



"After the cruise, I have to go in for surgery. I'm having a buffet removed from my thighs."

JUMBLE. THAT SCRAMBLED WORD GAME

Unscramble these four Jumbles, one letter to each square, to form four ordinary words.



Print answer here: (Answers tomorrow)

AMMAN FINANCIAL MARKET											
HOUSTON BANK CENTER AMMAN - STREET 101											
ORGANIZED MARKET SHARE PRICE LIST FOR SATURDAY 08/03/1997											
PAST 12 MONTHS	HIGH	LOW	COMPANY'S NAME	P / S	DIV.	NO. OF SHARES	NO. OF SHARES	VALUE TRADED	OPEN PRICE	CLOSE PRICE	CHANGE
269,000	205,000	205,000	ARAB BANK	14.5	1.32	4	1140	302220	266.50	265.50	1.00
2,100	1,900	1,900	JOR. NATIONAL BANK	8	0.00	4	4537	8756	1.94	1.93	0.01
1,210	880	880	MID. EAST INV. BK.	69.0	0.00	10	6400	6740	1.68	1.05	0.63
5,150	4,350	4,350	THE GULF BANK	12.4	2.91	2	210	976	4.65	4.65	0.00
2,950	2,440	2,440	JOR. KOWAT BANK	19.6	0.00	1	50	137	2.73	2.73	0.00
1,090	840	840	JOR. GULF BANK	5.1	8.14	14	29800	25283	85	86	014
4,120	3,400	3,400	JOR. ISLAMIC BANK	18.3	0.00	6	1350	5159	3.84	3.82	0.02
3,800	3,000	3,000	JOR. INV. FID. BANK	17.0	0.00	1	500	1575	3.20	3.15	0.05
1,440	1,000	1,000	PHILADEL. INV. BK.	9	0.00	2	7450	8717	1.21	1.17	0.04
BANK SECTOR TOTALS			INDEX: 199.74	CHANGE: -0.39		50	51494	359700			
2,800	1,830	1,830	JOR. FRENCH INSUR.	5.3	10.58	3	2700	5123	1.91	1.89	0.02
INSURANCE SECTOR TOTALS			INDEX: 119.40	CHANGE: -0.10		3	2700	5123			
1,830	1,450	1,450	JOR. ELECTRIC PWR.	11.4	7.32	4	2150	3526	1.65	1.64	0.01
1,540	1,080	1,080	NATL. PORTFOLIO	6	0.00	13	4291	4853	1.15	1.13	0.02
1,050	820	820	REAL ESTATE INV.	21.8	3.80	3	4400	4312	5.96	5.98	0.02
1,220	960	960	BARA EDUCATION	6	0.00	2	600	600	1.00	1.00	0.00
SERVICE SECTOR TOTALS			INDEX: 106.63	CHANGE: -0.09		34	11513	13332			
3,710	3,060	3,060	JOR. CHEMIST FACT.	19.8	2.88	13	4202	14541	3.46	3.47	0.01
3,500	3,120	3,120	JOR. PROSPECT MINES	35.5	0.00	3	251	825	3.30	3.30	0.00
6,100	4,950	4,950	ARAB POTASH CO.	18.2	3.33	2	123	730	6.00	6.00	0.00
10,400	8,720	8,720	JOR. PETROL. REFINERY	10.3	7.94	3	1236	12368	10.15	10.08	0.07
4,200	3,040	3,040	ARAB PHARM. MANF.	20.6	5.33	3	1000	3750	3.77	3.75	0.02
7,250	5,850	5,850	JOR. CERAMIC IND.	8.5	3.64	7	1092	7480	6.87	6.86	0.01
2,310	1,570	1,570	JOR. PAPER MANF.	8.9	7.45	1	500	808	1.61	1.61	0.00
3,310	2,500	2,500	GENERAL KITCHEN	6.3	13.24	1	500	1225	2.50	2.45	0.05
11,200	8,400	8,400	ARAB CHIM. DIST.	21.8	3.75	1	50	400	8.40	8.00	0.40
8,780	6,250	6,250	DAR ALAMAR BV. INV.	13.0	4.20	2	1000	4756	4.70	4.70	0.00
960	450	450	LITESTOCK & POLYMER	9	0.00	15	36000	13783	5.6	5.58	0.02
1,400	1,060	1,060	ARAB PAPER CORP. LTD.	7.8	9.01	2	1000	1550	1.15	1.15	0.00
1,020	540	540	NATIONAL IND.	9.5	9.38	9	3792	3408	3.64	3.64	0.00
1,540	510	510	INTERMED. PETRO. CHEM.	6	0.00	3	300	306	1.03	1.02	0.01
1,170	670	670	JOR. SULPHUR CHEM.	9	0.00	2	15000	10350	0.68	0.69	0.01
1,670	1,080	1,080	ARAB PHARM. CHEM.	27.9	0.00	2	700	1043	1.50	1.48	0.02
2,760	1,440	1,440	UNIL. FOOD INDUS.	5.2	11.76	2	350	435	1.59	1.59	0.00
1,820	1,140	1,140	JOR. INDUS. RESOURCES	17.0	0.00	30	18300	24704	1.35	1.35	0.00
1,270	840	840	JOR. NEW CABLE CO.	34.3	0.00	6	9387	8344	89	89	00
1,360	1,080	1,080	INTL. TOURISM	37.6	0.00	22	132600	15642	1.17	1.17	0.00
1,470	930	930	UNION CH. & VEG.	24.1	0.00	1	1000	980	99	98	01
INDUSTRIAL SECTOR TOTALS			INDEX: 117.64	CHANGE: +0.02		123	317182	366836			
GRAND TOTAL			INDEX: 155.76	CHANGE: -0.21		200	282889	644952			
PARALLEL MARKET SHARE PRICE LIST FOR SATURDAY 08/03/1997											
790	500	500	JOR. TRADE INC.	13.3	0.00	3	1200	600	51	50	01
1,000	1,000	1,000	JOR. FID. INV. CO. 751	5	0.00	1	250	175	1.00	0.95	0.05
1,850	690	690	UNION INV. SOI	65.1	0.00	31	53800	9855	69	68	01
840	370	370	ARAB FID. INVEST.	9	0.00	37	34100	13806	62	61	01
950	540	540	AL-DHULAY 751	14.7	0.00	1	50	20	65	64	01
1,540	210	210	JOR. INDUS. MACH. JEDCO	9	0.00	5	4500	945	22	21	01
740	310	310	ARAB FOOD & MED.	8	0.00	3	650	377	59	58	01
1,690	1,300	1,300	KHAL. CHLORIDE	9	0.00	11	26100	11506	46	44	02
1,690	450	450	ARAB FID. INV. LTD.	9	0.00	1	1000	520	32	31	01
820	520	520	NATL. PORTFOLIO	6	0.00	1	1000	520	32	31	01
850	400	400	KHAL. MACH. IND. LIMITED	9	0.00	34	52150	33008	44	43	01
1,660	430	430	KAYEER DIST. & MACHIN.	8	0.00	3	30000	18300	62	61	01
990	720	720	JORDAN STEEL	8	0.00	3	8036	5946	74	74	00
770	410	410	MIDWEST PHARM. 751	8	0.00	2	3400	1190	61	60	01
770	570	570	KHAL. FID. INV. 651	8	0.00	2	1450	564	56	56	00
820	490	490	IND. INC.	24.6	0.00	22	16800	6848	43	40	02
820	590	590	KHAL. FID. INV. 651	8	0.00	2	300	390	71	70	01
950	530	530	MID. EAST COMPLEX	7.9	0.00	23	144100	95257	66	67	01
GRAND TOTAL			INDEX: 186	CHANGE: 381186		191199					

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World Indoor Athletics Championships False start scare for Jackson

PARIS (AFP) — A relieved Colin Jackson moved into the 60m hurdle semifinals at the World Indoor Athletics Championships here Saturday after surviving a false start scare.

The 30-year-old world record holder admitted he had been unnerved when he was red flagged.

"I had images of Linford," said the Welshman, referring to Linford Christie's disastrous attempt to defend his Olympic 100m title at Atlanta last year when he was disqualified after two false starts.

"I know it wasn't a false start but it made me very careful," added Jackson, who won his heat in 7.52secs despite being slow off the blocks.

His time made him the fastest qualifier and put him firmly on track to take the title he was expected to win in Barcelona two years ago until a knee injury made it impossible for him to compete.

"This was just the short of start I needed. It has blown away the cobwebs," said Jackson, twice a silver medalist in the indoor championships.

Arch-rival Anier Garcia of Cuba, who has beaten Jackson in their last two meetings, won his heat with ease in 7.61secs.

The 21-year-old, who celebrates his birthday on Sunday, is determined to give himself a gold medal present.

"I feel fine and I am happy with my preparation. I don't fear anyone," said the

Cuban.

American Tony Dees, silver medalist in the 110m hurdles in the Barcelona Olympics, gave his podium hopes a boost with a comfortable heat win in 7.56secs.

The 33-year-old, in what will almost certainly be his last World Indoor Championship, took the bronze in Toronto four years ago, is determined to go at least one better this time.

But it was Jackson who continued to have the luck. He got the easiest of the semifinal draw.

Dees on the other hand was drawn in the same half as Garcia.

Lebanese high jumper taken to hospital

Lebanese high-jumper Jean-Claude Rabhath was taken to hospital with possible neck injuries here on Saturday at the World Indoor Athletics Championships.

Rabhath, whose personal best jump was 2.06 metres, fell onto the floor after failing his jump at 2.10 with his neck taking the full impact — remaining motionless for five minutes while the medical staff attended to him.

"Rabhath sustained no neurological damage and is able to move but we are sending him to hospital for X-rays," said an IAAF spokesman who suspected neck damage.



Haralambros Papadakis of Greece screams while holding up his national flag after winning the men's 60 metres final on the first day of the three-day World Indoor Athletics Championships at Bercy stadium in Paris. Papadakis clocked a time of 6.50 seconds to win ahead of Michael Green of Jamaica and Davidson Ezinwa of Nigeria who finished third placed (Reuters photo)

Drug rules suspended to ensure Greek gold

PARIS (AFP) — International Amateur Athletic Federation (IAAF) drug testing regulations were quietly suspended to ensure Haralambros Papadakis of Greece would not be stripped of his 60m world Indoor Championship title, IAAF officials confirmed on Saturday.

The 22-year-old pulled off a stunning upset on Friday night when he won the 60m final ahead of strongly fancied Bruny Surin of Canada, looking for his third successive title, and Michael Green of Jamaica.

Under IAAF rules all athletes must have undergone two out of competition drug tests before competing at the world championships but the Greek had had only one — reportedly last week.

Determined to avoid a scandal by stripping Papadakis of his newly found title, fame and fortune, officials decided to count his test taken here Friday morning after his heat as his second 'out of competition'.

"What else could we do," said an IAAF official. "We could not strip him of his gold medal and the \$30,000 first prize," he added.

Papadakis won in 6.50secs with Green second in 6.51 and Davidson Ezinwa of Nigeria taking the bronze in 6.52.

Surin trailed in fifth place in 6.57secs. Minutes after the race Green made no secret that he was stunned by Papadakis' unexpected victory.

"The Greeks have been running well all season but I never saw them as gold medalists. I thought I had won the race when I looked across and Surin was not in sight. I never thought of looking to see where Papadakis was," said the 26-year-old Jamaican, the fastest man this season in the event.

Papadakis is a member of the Greek team being investigated after the indoor meeting in Dortmund last month when a team official reportedly scuffled with a German dope testing official.

The IAAF doping commission demanded a report be presented to the IAAF council in Turin later this month about the incident.

German tester Klaus Wengoborski said all the Greek athletes at the meeting had left before they could be tested.

Barcelona coast to 95-77 win in Berlin

BERLIN (R) — Last year's beaten finalists Barcelona coasted to a 95-77 win over Alba Berlin in the first leg of their last 16 Euroleague tie on Thursday.

Before a sell-out crowd of 9,000 in Berlin, the Spaniards broke clear midway through the first half with a series of easy lay-ups after guard Aleksandar Djordjevic made several superb passes to leave his teammates clear under the basket.

Berlin led briefly 22-21, but Barcelona opened up a 12-point lead at halftime after running Berlin's surprisingly ineffective defence ragged.

"Barcelona played very

well from the start and their offensive game was very strong," Alba coach Sverislav Pesic said.

"They scored with over 90 per cent of their shots in the first half and 71 per cent overall. We obviously didn't play good defence. We were hesitant and did not play aggressively enough."

Djordjevic, a Serbian national team player who returned to Europe this year after playing for the Portland Trailblazers in the NBA, dished out 10 assists and scored 10 points in Barcelona's balanced attack.

Six Barcelona players scored more than 10 points, with Arturas Karnisovas

scoring 21, Andres Jimenez 19, Javier Fernandez 15 and Roberto Duenas 13 points.

Wendell Alexis led Berlin's attack with 25 points, most of them in the first half. Sascha Obradovic scored 14 and Henning Harnisch 13.

Berlin chipped away at Barcelona's lead midway through the second half, moving to within six points at 63-56 with 10 minutes to play.

But Barcelona rallied and outscored the Germans 14-4 in a four-minute period to seal their victory.

The two teams meet in Barcelona for the second game on Tuesday.

Villeneuve takes pole in Melbourne

MELBOURNE (AP) — Jacques Villeneuve stamped his "and the" Williams Renault team's authority on Sunday's season-opening Formula One Grand Prix with an overpowering performance in qualifying here Saturday.

The 25-year-old Canadian, who started off the pole when second behind then teammate Damon Hill in last year's race, was the fastest qualifier, 1.75 seconds quicker than German teammate Heinz-Harald Frentzen and an onerous 2.1 seconds slicker than Ferrari's Michael Schumacher.

Villeneuve hurtled around the 5.3 kilometre (3.29 mile) Albert Park circuit in one minute 29.369 seconds, averaging 213.5 kmh (132.7 mph) and is clearly the driver to beat in Sunday's big race.

It was Villeneuve's fourth career pole in his 17th GP drive.

Schumacher was startled by the two-second difference a lap Villeneuve enjoyed in Saturday's once-only qualifying hit-out and had to be content with third fastest time of 1:31.472.

But the two-time German world champion is confident of his Ferrari car finishing the 307-kilometre GP after failing to complete last year's race in his first drive for the cult Italian team.

"The car was great, it's very drivable on the edge, you can get sideways and control it and that's very good," Villeneuve said afterwards.

Last year Villeneuve, in his debut F1 drive since switching from Indycars, had the Australian GP in his keeping but had to ease up to conserve dwindling oil pressure allowing hill to scoot clear four laps from the chequered flag.



Defending world champion Damon Hill drives his Arrow F1 car during the qualifying session in Melbourne for the Australian Grand Prix. Hill qualified in 20th position with former Williams teammate Canada's Jacques Villeneuve taking the pole position for the season's opening race on Sunday (Reuters photo)

"The car was good from the beginning, although we weren't that quick yesterday and earlier on today, but once we were running a qualifying trim and going for it then the car felt great," said Villeneuve, the early favourite for the world title this year.

Frentzen, who replaced Hill when the reigning world champion was dumped from the champion Williams team last year, produced a scorching last lap to snatch the second position from Schumacher.

Schumacher was within a minute of joining Villeneuve on the front row of the starting grid with a best effort of 1:31.472 when Frentzen stormed from seventh to second with 1:31.123.

"For me it's my best qualifying so far in my career in Formula One. I can't open a bottle of champagne right now, but I'm happy," said

Frentzen.

Schumacher, content to pick up early podium points before mounting a Ferrari challenge to Williams later in the season, paid tribute to the superiority of the dominant Williams team.

"After yesterday I'm surprised. I expected the Williams to be fast, roughly between half a second to one second, but obviously not two seconds to me, but it means we have to work very hard to get our car sorted out," said Schumacher.

"I am happy to be in this position. I didn't expect myself to be there after starting slow and to be in front of the Benetton and McLaren's and all the rest it's not too bad."

Schumacher has only finished once in six Australian GP starts.

McLaren's David Coulthard was fourth fastest in 1:31.531 ahead of last

year's third placegetter Eddie Irvine, in a Ferrari.

Apart from Villeneuve's fireworks and Williams' superiority at the other end of the scale, defending champion Damon Hill only scraped into Sunday's field as 20th and penultimate qualifier in his troublesome Arrows car.

It was only inside the final five minutes of the session that 36-year-old Hill confirmed his place under the 107 per cent limit compared to the fastest time to weed out track dawdlers. The faster Villeneuve went the tougher it became for Hill to qualify.

"I thought for a moment I was going to have Saturday night out in Melbourne," said Hill. "We were beset with problems with the race car so I had to take the spare car and it wasn't really set up right, but I don't think qualifying 20th is representative of our true pace."

Dortmund edge clear in Bundesliga

BONN (AFP) — Borussia Dortmund put the pressure firmly back on Bayern Munich in the German Bundesliga on Saturday as they won 2-1 at struggling Freiburg to go ahead of the Bavarian giants on goal difference.

With Bayern playing in the top match of the weekend at Leverkusen on Sunday, reigning champions Dortmund came from behind to secure victory with a goal from young Ghanaian Ibrahim Tanko and a last-gasp penalty by captain Michael Zorc.

Fourth-placed VfB Stuttgart meanwhile closed the gap with Leverkusen as they thrashed a mediocre Hamburg side 4-1, Giovanni Elber twice on target.

Borussia Moenchengladbach, struggling in the relegation zone despite a strong squad, shocked Werder Bremen 4-1. Swedish striker Martin Dahlin, who returned from an unsuccessful spell with AS Roma earlier this season, put Moenchengladbach into a 29th minute lead.

And Polish dangerman Andrej Juskowiak then scored twice to put the issue beyond doubt before Joergen Pettersen hit the fourth.

Elsewhere, Karlsruhe kept up their challenge for a UEFA Cup spot with a 4-2 win at struggling Sankt Pauli.

SPORTS IN BRIEF

Morceli in million-dollar showdown

PARIS (AFP) — Double world record holder Haile Gebrselassie and triple world champion Noureddine Morceli are to go head to head in a million dollar showdown in May. The two athletes will compete over a special two-mile race during the Adriaan Paulen memorial meeting in the Netherlands and if one of them can beat the eight-minute harrier there is a one-million-dollar prize.

Dorans Pride to run in Gold Cup

DUBLIN (R) — Ireland's Dorans Pride will run in next Thursday's Grade One Gold Cup race at Cheltenham, a spokesman for Limerick-based trainer Michael Hourigan said on Friday. Dorans Pride, winner of the 1995 Stayers' Hurdle at Cheltenham, is second-favourite at 6-1 with Dublin bookmakers for the three miles and two furlongs (4.2-km) trip behind 1996 champion Imperial Call (5-1). Hourigan's stable star will be partnered in the feature event of the three-day Cheltenham festival, which starts on Tuesday, by Shane Broderick.

Albania's qualifiers move to Spain

ZURICH (R) — World soccer's governing body FIFA said on Friday Albania's upcoming World Cup qualifying matches against Ukraine and Germany would be switched from Tirana to Granada in Spain. The decision was taken because of the troubled political situation in Albania, a FIFA announcement said. The match against Ukraine was to have been played in the Albanian capital on March 29 and the Germany game on April 4. FIFA said the Spanish Football Federation had offered Granada's Los Carnenes Stadium, which has a capacity of 15,400 seats, for the two games. They would still be recorded as home games for Albania. Kick-off times remained to be fixed.

'Eriksson signed for Lazio'

ROME (R) — Sampdoria's Swedish coach Sven Goran Eriksson, who backed out of an agreement with English club Blackburn, has signed a contract with Lazio, an Italian newspaper reported on Friday. "Eriksson has signed," declared the Corriere Dello sport newspaper in a front page headline, adding that Sampdoria striker Roberto Mancini was expected to follow him. "From yesterday, March 6, 1997, Sven Goran Eriksson... is officially the next coach of Lazio," it said. Eriksson had been expected to sign for Lazio, although recent reports had also linked him to Inter Milan, but both he and the Rome Club have kept silent on the rumours. The newspaper said Eriksson's fax arrived at Lazio headquarters on Thursday and he had signed until June 30, 1999 for around 1.6 billion Lire a year (\$900,000). British newspapers had reported that the 49-year-old Eriksson's three-year contract with Blackburn was worth more than one million pounds (\$1.6 million). Eriksson, who has been at Sampdoria for five years and previously coached Lazio's arch-rivals Roma, signed a deal with Premier League Club Blackburn in December. But Blackburn said last month that the Swede had pulled out of his contract and later announced they had signed Inter Milan coach Roy Hodgson from next season instead. Lazio have been coached temporarily by club president Dino Zoff since they fired Czech coach Zdenek Zeman. The club has had a poor season and are ninth in the Italian League.

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Rodman returns as Chicago clinch playoff berth

CHICAGO (AP) — Dennis Rodman returned from a suspension to grab 18 rebounds and Michael Jordan scored 38 points as Chicago became the first team to clinch a playoff berth by beating Indiana 104-96 Friday night.

Scottie Pippen added 24 points for the Bulls, who are 53-7 overall and 30-1 at the United Centre with 23 straight home victories.

Reggie Miller scored 27 points and Rik Smits 22 for the Pacers, who fell 4 1/2 games behind Cleveland in their bid for the Conference's final playoff spot.

In Landover, Maryland, Tim Hardaway scored a career-high 45 points and Miami, after blowing a 20-point, fourth-quarter lead and getting a break on a crucial missed free throw, beat Washington 108-105 in overtime.

In Boston, Patrick Ewing scored a season-high 39 points and New York overcame a 20-point deficit to beat Boston 113-102.

The Knicks won their 19th straight against Boston, the longest winning streak over the Celtics by any team in their 50-year history. Boston has dropped 16 of its last 17 games.

Rick Fox scored 25 points in the first half on his way to a career-high 34 points for the Celtics.

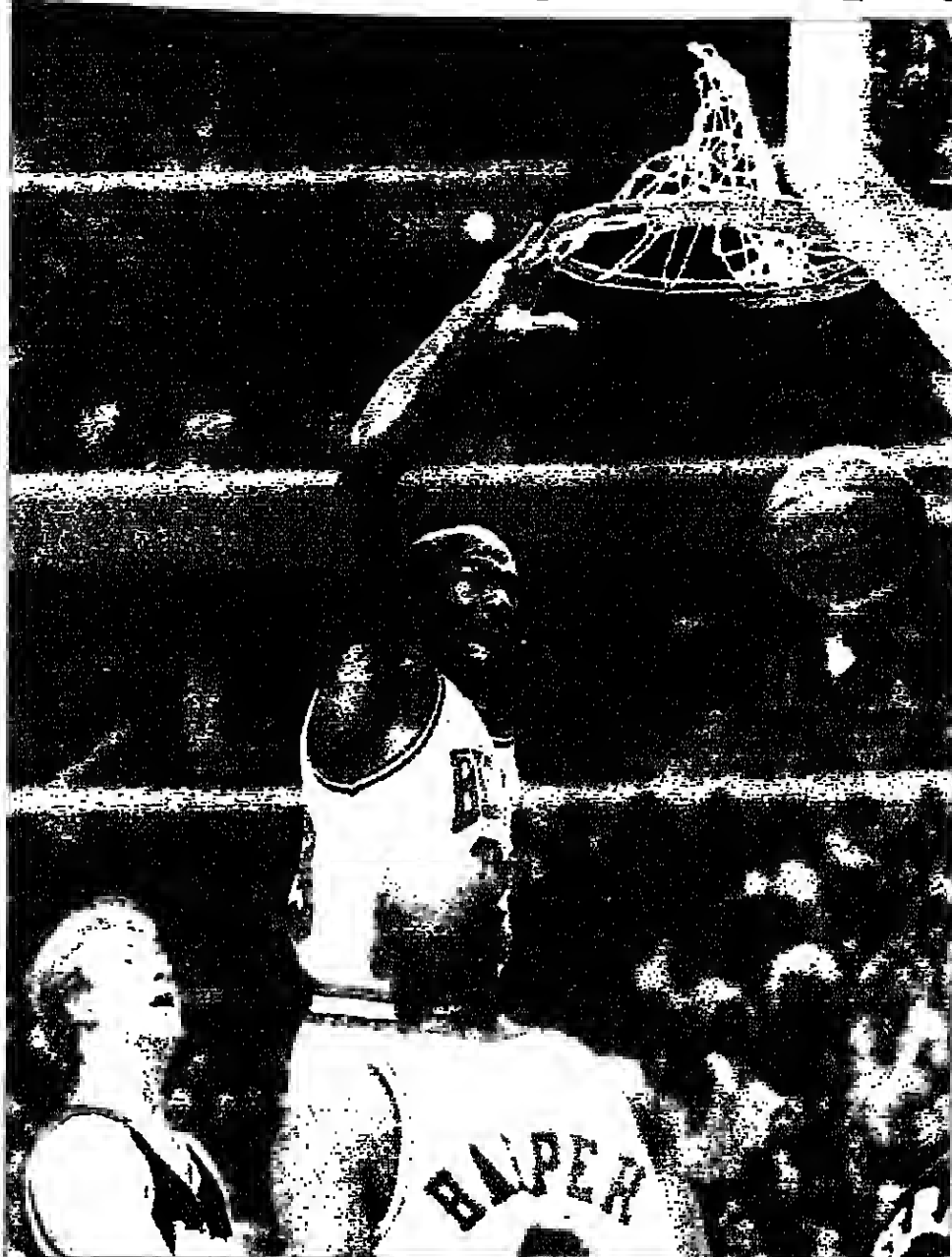
In Toronto, Vernon Maxwell tied his season high with 34 points, including six in the final 92 seconds, to help San Antonio end a seven-game losing streak 106-103.

Marcus Camby had 21 and Wali Williams 15 for the Raptors, who lost their fifth straight game.

In Atlanta, the Hawks tied a team record by limiting Milwaukee to only eight points in the third quarter, and Dikembe Mutombo and Steve Smith scored 20 points apiece to win 90-80.

Which was led by Glenn Robinson's 26 points, went the final five minutes of the third without scoring. The Bucks shot only 3-of-17 from the field in the period while committing five turnovers. The Hawks, who have won four in a row, improved their record at the Omni to 26-3.

All five starters scored in



Chicago Bulls' Michael Jordan slam dunks after slipping by Indiana Pacers' Rik Smits (L) to score during first quarter action, at the United Centre (Reuters photo)

double figures as Christian Laettner had 16 points, Mookie Blaylock 11 and Tyrone Corbin 10. Blaylock also tied a season high with 12 assists.

In Minneapolis, Tom Gugliotta recovered from a poor first quarter and sparked a third-quarter comeback as Minnesota Timberwolves beat the Nuggets 96-83.

In Portland, Oregon, Dallas' ugly road tour hit Portland, and the Mavericks failed to reach 70 points for the second straight game losing to the Blazers 80-69.

In Seattle, Hersey Hawkins scored 26 points and Gary Payton added 24 as Seattle improved its post-all star mark to 10-2 winning 109-90. Payton scored

16 of his points in the first eight minutes of the game, and Hawkins shot 8-of-12 and didn't play in the fourth quarter.

The Sonics earned a split of the season series. They lost to New Jersey 110-101 in their previous meeting.

In Salt Lake City, Karl Malone tied his season high with 41 points, including 14 in the fourth quarter, as Utah defeated Detroit 93-88.

John Stockton added 16 points, including a 3-pointer

that broke an 88-all tie with the Jazz the lead for good as they won their fourth straight and their 13th in 15 games.

Grant Hill led Detroit with 29 points, 19 in the second half, but turned the ball over with one minute to play after Stockton's go-ahead 3-pointer.

Malone followed with a basket and Stockton made two free throws for the final margin.

In Phoenix, Kevin

Johnson scored 21 points and backcourt mates Jason Kidd and Rex Chapman led a fourth-quarter charge as Phoenix defeated Sacramento at home for the 21st consecutive time 104-87.

Chapman finished with 17 points and Kidd had 15, and the two combined for 15 of Phoenix's first 17 points of the fourth quarter to break open a close game.

Mitch Richmond, who had 40 points the last time the Kings were in Phoenix, scored 32 this time but one in the last 8:57 after his layup pulled the Kings to 74-73.

In Inglewood, California, Hakeem Olajuwon had 23 points to overtake Elgin Baylor for 14th on the NBA career scoring list and Houston routed Los Angeles Rockets 111-90 for its fourth straight victory.

Olajuwon passed Baylor on Houston's first basket of the game. He has 23,170 points in 12 seasons and needs just seven more points to move ahead of Adrian Dantley for 13th place. Olajuwon's performance helped the Rockets win without their other two all-stars — Charles Barkley and Clyde Drexler.

The Lakers also were missing a superstar in Shaquille O'Neal, but that wasn't enough of an excuse for a dreadful first half. Los Angeles trailed 62-33 at the break after scoring just 10 points — eight on free throws — in the second quarter.

In San Jose, California, Latrell Sprewell had 21 points and 10 assists and made three free throws in the final minute as Golden State overcame a 15-point deficit to beat Orlando 108-101.

Horace Grant topped Orlando with 23 points. Rony Seikaly, a former Warrior, was booed each time he touched the ball.

In preparation for World Cup qualifiers Kingdom's soccer team plays Oman today

By Shibli Shatarat in Muscat and Aileen Bannayan in Amman

THE KINGDOM'S national soccer team meets Oman Sunday hoping to score a win in their fifth friendly international in preparation for the Asian World Cup qualifiers which kick off in Manama, Bahrain April 8.

Seven of Al Faisali's players, who were on leave to take part in the Arab Champions Cup in Morocco, Saturday joined the national team's training camp in Muscat — the third leg of the team's camps abroad following visits to Lebanon and Iraq earlier last month.

Following three losses and one draw the national team's coaches hope their players will go on the offensive early in the match hoping the team's form is enhanced with the arrival of Al Faisali's players who include top strikers Subhi Suleiman, Jiryes Tadros and Mohammad Mahadin who was chosen best player in the Arab Champions Cup in Morocco earlier this week.

The Omani team is also looking to secure their first victory after losing 1-0 to Bahrain and drawing with a Swiss team.

The team's head coach Mahmoud Al Gohari is said to be quitting his post to return to Egypt.

The Jordanian team had five practice sessions after arriving in Muscat. Isam Mahmoud has been ruled out after his injury recurred so has Aref Hussein, whose morale is clearly affected after his father passed away last week.

The visit to Oman comes less than two weeks after an intensive two-week-long training camp in Baghdad where they played the Iraqi team twice losing 1-0.

Jordan also had two matches with the Lebanese national team losing the first encounter in Beirut 1-0 while the second one in Amman ended in a 0-0 draw.

The Jordanian team will meet their Omani counterparts in a second match March 11.

Other friendlies scheduled by the Jordan Soccer Federation include two matches against Syria, March 16 in Amman and March 23 in Damascus.

Jordan's Asian Group 3 qualifiers start April 8 against the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain.

Thirty-six Asian countries will contest the first round World Cup qualifiers and have been divided into ten groups: Group 1: Saudi Arabia, Malaysia, Bangladesh and Taiwan.

Group 2: Iran, Syria, Maldives, Kyrgyzstan.

Group 3: United Arab Emirates, Jordan, Bahrain.

Group 4: Japan, Oman, Nepal, Macao. Group 5: Uzbekistan, Indonesia, Yemen, Cambodia.

Group 6: South Korea, Thailand, Hong Kong.

Group 7: Kuwait, Lebanon, Singapore.

Group 8: China, Turkmenistan, Vietnam, Tajikistan.

Group 9: Iraq, Pakistan, Kazakhstan.

Group 10: Qatar, India, Sri Lanka, Philippines.

The 10 groups winners will qualify for the second round where the teams will be divided into two groups.

The first two from each group will then contest the Asian finals.

The first three qualify directly for the 1998 World Cup in France while the winner of a play-off between the fourth team and the Oceania Zone winner will also qualify.

The Kingdom's team includes Ahmad Abu Nasouh, Mu'taz Rishah, Mohammad Abu Daoud, Yousef Ammouri, Mohammad Khaz'ali, Abdallah Abu Zame'h, Amjad Taher, Faisal Ibrahim, Isam Mahmoud, Hussein Shananeh, Ra'fat Ali, Adnan Awad, Khaled Yousef, Walid Abdul Rahman, Munir Abu Hantash, Aref Hussein, Nart Yaday, Bassam Al Khatib, Ahmad Khalil, Mohammad Mahadin, Jamal Abu Abed, Subhi Suleiman, Ja'far Hammad, Hassounah Sheikh and Jiryes-Tadros.

GOREN BRIDGE

WITH OMAR SHARIF & TAMARA HIRSCH

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SHOW AND TELL

Neither vulnerable. South deals.

NORTH

♠ 7 3

♥ 10 7 6 4 3

♦ 2

♣ A K Q 8 4

WEST

♠ A Q 9 5

♥ 9 8

♦ A Q 8 7 6

♣ 10 9

SOUTH

♠ K 1 4

♥ A K J 9 5

♦ 9 5

♣ 6 3 2

The bidding:

WEST NORTH EAST

10 40 50 Pass

Pass Pass Pass

Opening lead?

No matter what convention you

adopt, there is a price to pay.

The obvious one is that you lose the

meaning of the conventional

bid. The cover disadvantage is that

the enemy, too, is privy to the same

information and might be able to

use that knowledge to their advantage.

Consider this example.

North's jump to four diamonds

was a Splinter Bid, showing a hand

good enough for a raise to game,

therefore with good trump support,

and a singleton in the bid suit.

Unfortunately that enabled East to

double to show good diamonds, so

West elected to sacrifice in five diamonds

against four hearts. The

save was a good one, since it could

be defeated no more than two

tricks, depending on how West

tackled the spades, but North, not

surprisingly, was unwilling to

defend.

Sitting East-West were Bobby

Goldman and Paul Soloway, respectively.

They wasted no time in taking

advantage of the revealing auction.

Since East almost surely held

a high diamond for the lead-directing

double of four diamonds, West

had no difficulty in underleading

the ace-queen of diamonds. Soloway

selected the diamond eight as the

opening lead to suggest values in

spades. On winning the king of diamonds,

it was easy for East to shift

to a spade, and the defenders had

three tricks in the bank before

declarer could get started.

Note that, without the dramatic

underlead at trick one, declarer will

have more than enough tricks. And

unless North had the distribution,

we would be very suspicious of any

West who found the defense.

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CJC Fashion & Trade Show Summer 1997

THE CORE objective of the fashion and trade show is the launch of the 1997 Summer Collection. Presented in a highly commercial and innovative way, the trade show is expected to attract a large number of selected trade personnel and import/export companies. The range of products in show this year include men's shirts, trousers, knitted garments, pyjamas, polo shirts, and professional wear.

Also in show, is the British Van Heusen collection. This product line will be stretched this year to include a greater variety of items such as trousers, jockeys, ties and shirts.

New cuts, colour, and fabrics stand out as distinctive elements of our fashion trade show. Fashion this year reflects more clearly the personality of the user as the

variety of styles and cuts go in more than one direction thus reflecting the user's life-style of wear.

Jordan Clothing Company was established in 1949 as privately owned company specialising in the manufacture of men's shirts. Today CJC owns the biggest factory in Jordan for the production of Men's Shirts and has expanded its product line to include men's trousers, men's knitted garments, pyjamas & professional wear.

The factory occupies about 3,700 square metres, employing 350 workforce, with a production capacity of 650,000 pieces per annum.

Jordan Clothing Company is exclusively the licensee of the British Van Heusen company in Jordan.

Iraq food deals bogged down in U.N. procedures

UNITED NATIONS (Agencies) — A U.N. official admitted Friday that the first humanitarian supplies purchased under the Iraqi oil-for-food plan may not reach the Iraqi people until late April, four months after the programme began.

Last December, the United Nations gave the go-ahead for Iraq to sell up to \$2 billion worth of oil for an initial six-month period to buy food and medicine for its people suffering the effects of nearly seven years of U.N. sanctions.

Although Iraq resumed exports immediately, no food has yet reached the country, in part because of the cumbersome nature of the controls set in place to prevent the Iraqi government from keeping supplies away from its opponents.

U.N. diplomats, speaking on condition of anonymity, also said the U.N. Department of Humanitarian Affairs, headed by Yasushi Akashi of Japan, had mishandled many of the arrangements and officials from other U.N. offices had to step in to get the programme back on track.

U.N. spokesman Fred Eckhard said the first shipment of wheat from France was supposed to arrive in Umm Qasr, Iraq, in mid-March. But the ship carrying the grain developed engine trouble off Spain and is undergoing repairs.

He said the ship, which was not identified, is now scheduled to arrive in Iraq on March 30. It will be joined by another ship carrying French wheat due about the same time.

But Mr. Eckhard said it would take several weeks to distribute the food under international supervision.

Iraq claims the United States is intentionally delaying the delivery of humanitarian goods. But U.N. officials, speaking on condition of anonymity, denied any such U.S. move.

They said that the Clinton administration was privately concerned over the delays, fearing it will be blamed if the U.N. programme bogs down further.

The Security Council imposed sanctions on Iraq in 1990 after Baghdad invaded Kuwait. Those sanctions will remain until the council is satisfied that Iraq has complied with

orders to destroy high-tech weapons programmes.

But Russia and Arab governments have urged the council to ensure the sanctions do not continue indefinitely. U.N. officials say the United States fears that delays in food shipments will only serve to increase pressure to lift the sanctions for humanitarian reasons.

Scud debris sent to U.S.

The first debris from Scud missiles destroyed in Iraq has been transported out of the country and was expected to arrive in the United States on Saturday, U.N. officials said.

Debris from the destroyed missiles was transferred yesterday (Friday) to Bahrain and should reach the United States on Saturday, Roger Knight, a senior inspector of the U.N. Special Commission on Disarming Iraq (UNSCOM), told AFP.

The Iraqi government agreed last month to release for analysis Iraqi missile engines after blocking more than 130 remnants for three months.

United Nations weapons inspectors have been unable to account for all missiles which Baghdad claims to have destroyed unilaterally since the 1991 Gulf war.

Mr. Knight said he did not know whether the debris comprised everything sought by U.N. inspectors.

But he added that the remnants had been transported out of the country on a UNSCOM plane to a base in Bahrain before heading for an unidentified laboratory in the United States.

The oil embargo against Iraq can only be lifted when UNSCOM certifies that Baghdad's arms of mass destruction and missiles with a range of more than 150 kilometres have been eliminated along with the potential to build more.

The United Nations voted last week to retain the sanctions.

Iraq agreed in February to allow the missile debris to be transported out of the country under the condition that it be examined at several laboratories, not just those in the United States.

UNSCOM is also considering offers from laboratories in France and Russia to examine the debris, officials said.



PROTEST: Palestinian students from Bir Zeit University demonstrate on Saturday against an Israeli plan to build a new Jewish settlement on Jabal Abu Ghneim in Arab East Jerusalem (Reuters photo)

About 800 arrested in Sudan — Mahdi

CAIRO (AFP) — Sudanese opposition leader Sadeq Al Mahdi has accused the government in Khartoum of arresting around 800 people since an anti-government offensive launched in January. Al Ahram daily said Saturday.

"I believe that the number of arrests have reached 800 in the capital and other places," Mr. Mahdi told the Egyptian government daily in an interview conducted in Asmara.

"They are treated badly, denied visits and food and they are humiliated by being insulted while some are beaten up," the former prime minister and head of the opposition Umma Party said.

The U.S.-based Human Rights Watch group said in February that the Sudanese government had rounded up several opposition militants and partisans since an opposition offensive was launched on Jan. 12 to oust the government in Khartoum.

Many detainees are being held in "detention facilities known as ghost-houses where they reportedly are tortured," Human Rights Watch/Africa said in a statement issued Feb. 19.

"There are too many detainees to list separately," it said.

"Amnesty International estimates there have been at least 91 arrests in the last two months," it said, adding that most were still behind bars and included opposition leaders, former ministers and trade unionists.

Sudan's National Democratic Alliance (NDA), which groups the northern opposition and southern rebels, launched an offensive against Sudan's eastern border nearly one month after Mr. Mahdi fled Khartoum for Asmara.

Mr. Mahdi said he expected an "inflood" to be launched against the Khartoum government and reiterated that the opposition demand wanted democracy to prevail in Khartoum.

He also reiterated that there would be a referendum on the future of Sudan once the Khartoum regime fell.

'Ethiopians on border'

Alwan, an independent Sudanese newspaper, said Saturday that Ethiopian troops are gathered in advance positions near the border with Sudan's eastern Gedaref state.

It said the Ethiopian troops had taken up positions along a border strip north of territories occupied by anti-government forces last January.

The daily quoted Karamallah Al Sheikh, speaker of Gedaref state parliament, as saying a general mobilisation was continuing in the state and warning against any attempt to invade Gedaref.

Questioning begins of five Red Army suspects in Beirut

BEIRUT (Agencies) — Five suspected Japanese Red Army members appeared before an investigating magistrate Saturday, judicial officials said.

Speaking on condition of anonymity, they said the suspects were brought into the justice palace overnight and that their interrogation began at 8:45 a.m. (06:45 GMT) Saturday.

The Japanese, arrested in mid-February, were indicted Thursday on charges of forgery and illegal entry. They are expected to go on trial in Lebanon rather than be extradited to Japan.

If convicted, the suspects face jail sentences of up to 15 years with hard labour, Lebanese officials said.

Three other Japanese also arrested last month have been released by Lebanese authorities for lack of evidence.

Reporters and news cameramen at the justice palace did not see the suspects, who are said to have spent the night in a room next door to the office of the investigating magistrate, Saeed Mirza, on the first floor of the four-storey building.

There was heavy security in and around the building.

The judicial officials said the first to be interrogated by Mr. Mirza was Masao Adachi, whose lawyer Beshara Abu Al Saad attended the questioning.

Mr. Abu Saad is defending all five suspects with the

help of 160 lawyers who volunteered to defend the Red Army members in a gesture designed to honor anti-Israeli attacks by the group.

On Friday Beirut lawyers' union leader Shakib Corbawi said the suspects had rejected the offer of help, but on Saturday two lawyers named by Mr. Corbawi to defend the group withdrew from the case.

The five Japanese arrested on Feb. 15 in Beirut and the Syrian-controlled Bekaa Valley were charged Thursday with forging documents and illegal residence in Lebanon, offences that can carry prison terms of between three and seven years.

In Tokyo, Lebanon's ambassador to Japan, Samir Shamma, said Friday it could take up to six months to complete legal proceedings against the five Japanese.

"It is my personal estimate, but I think it would take five to six months," the ambassador said, adding that they would probably then be deported.

The Red Army group, which is sympathetic to Palestinians, is blamed for carrying out a series of spectacular attacks during its heyday in the 1970s.

Among the suspects is Kozo Okamoto, 49, who served 12 years in an Israeli jail for a 1972 attack on Tel

Aviv airport in which 26 people were killed. He was freed in 1985 in a prisoner exchange between Israel and Palestinian guerrillas.

Faisal Salman, managing editor of the leftist Al Safir daily and brother of its publisher, wrote a moving column in Saturday's edition and suggested that the alleged Red Army members were victims.

"Kozo Okamoto did not commit a crime in Lebanon. Kozo Okamoto has been sick for many years because of the torture in Israeli prisons ... Is it possible that he can be a forger of a passport?"

That was a reference to Okamoto's failing mental health after his release in 1985. He was described by Israeli officials at the time as a "vegetable." Unconfirmed Lebanese press reports have said that he had been brainwashed as a dog and barked whenever food was offered to him.

Mr. Salman described Okamoto as part of the Arabs' "pride and dignity" and called him "our guest."

"Is this the way an Arab honours his guest?" asked Mr. Salman.

"Kozo Okamoto is a humanitarian cause ... The least that can be done is that he be considered a political refugee in Lebanon," Mr. Salman wrote.

"Okamoto, our houses and hearts are (open) for you. Okamoto, our beloved."

Yemen steps up pressure on tribal kidnappers

SANAA (AFP) — Yemen on Saturday stepped up pressure on tribesmen holding seven German tourists by sending new security units and helicopters to the clan's hide-out, while mediation efforts were also underway, officials said.

"New units, with the support of helicopters, have been sent today" to the Wadi Marya region in Dabaan Valley in southern Yemen, where armed gunmen are holed up with the hostages, said an official in the region.

"A representative of the security forces is due to start negotiations with the kidnappers" who are demanding a ransom of \$7 million from the Yemeni government, the official added.

The reinforcements are designed to put pressure on the kidnappers, and are not preparing a military operation to free the hostages, the official said.

The seven Germans, who were touring southern Yemen by motorbike, were snatched on Monday by up to 50 armed men in Mukalla, around 770 kilometres southeast of Sanaa.

The foreign ministry in Bonn on Friday dampened earlier optimism that the seven bikers, all men aged between 30 and 40, were on the verge of being freed.

But the director of the agency which arranged the Germans' motorcycle tour said he expected the kidnappers to release their hostages this weekend.

"The affair should reach a happy conclusion tonight or tomorrow morning after the authorities accepted the mediation of a tribal chief at the request of the tourists," said Mohammed Ali.

"In recognition of the hospitality of their captors, the tourists have asked the authorities not to resort to force and to accept mediation by a tribal chief to reach a rapid settlement of this affair," Mr. Ali said.

No confirmation of this could be obtained either from Yemeni officials or the German embassy in Sanaa.



Austria's black widow sentenced to life in jail

VIENNA (R) — An Austrian court on Friday sentenced Elfriede Blauensteiner, dubbed the "black widow" by the media, to life imprisonment for poisoning an elderly male pensioner with fatal doses of medication. The court in Krems, 50 kilometres west of Vienna, found Blauensteiner, 66, guilty of the murder of 77-year-old Alois Pichler. The case had all the elements of a Hollywood thriller. Blauensteiner was accused of placing advertisements in newspapers to meet rich, elderly men, allegedly poisoning her victims and then gambling away the money they left her in their will.

Spice Girls a hit with Thatcher and Fergie

LONDON (R) — Britain's duchess of York knows all their names, opposition leader Tony Blair managed only three out of five and Margaret Thatcher sent them a Christmas card. The Spice Girls, a feisty quintet who say former Prime Minister Thatcher is their role model, dominate British pop music and shot to number one in the U.S. hit parade with their first single, a feat never achieved by the Beatles.

But the Daily Mirror found some celebrities had trouble naming all five — Mel C, Emma, Victoria, Geri and Mel B. Opposition Labour Party leader Blair, who played lead guitar in a student pop group, could not remember the names of two members of the group when asked.

Peruvians invited to audition for hostage film

LIMA (R) — Peru and Marxist rebels holding 72 hostages may be far from ending the 79-day crisis at the Japanese ambassador's residence, but a film dramatising the siege starts casting on Tuesday. A U.S.-Peruvian joint venture announced on Thursday it will hold auditions to choose 1,000 extras who will represent the guests at a lavish cocktail party stormed on Dec. 17 by some 20 heavily armed Tupac Amaru Revolutionary Movement (MRTA) rebels. The film will concentrate on the protagonists inside the residence, with the main characters being key hostages Foreign Minister Francisco Tudela and Japanese Ambassador Morihisa Aoki. Peruvian filmmaker Video Mundo said.

No more sausage sandwiches, inmate pleads

TURIN (R) — An Italian man accused of being a member of the mafia pleaded with prison authorities on Thursday for mercy — no more sausage sandwiches. "We've had enough of mortadella, we can't take it any more," Giuseppe Calascibetta, 46, shouted from behind bars in a high-security prison courtroom where he and others are on trial for the murder in 1992 of anti-mob Judge Paolo Borsellino. Mortadella is a popular type of processed sausage from the northern town of Bologna. "Ever since I got here the menu's been the same — a sandwich with a very thin slice of mortadella and in the evening, when we get back to our cells, they give us a potato," he said. "The lucky ones get a little slice of ham."

Israeli warplanes and artillery bomb S. Lebanese villages

SIDON (Agencies) — Israeli warplanes and artillery pounded suspected guerrilla positions in South Lebanon Saturday, security officials said.

Two Israeli warplanes fired four air-to-surface missiles at guerrilla positions in Iqlim Al Tufah, a stronghold of the Iranian-backed Hizbollah group, the officials said, speaking on customary condition of anonymity.

Israeli troops also fired Howitzer shells at suspected Hizbollah positions in Iqlim Al Tufah, just across from an Israeli-occupied border enclave.

There was no word on casualties from the attacks, officials said. Iqlim Al Tufah is 20 kilometres southeast of Sidon, provincial capital of South Lebanon.

Israel says it maintains the border strip to protect its northern territories from cross-border guerrilla attacks.

The jets fired four missiles at Hizbollah positions in the Jbaa area at around 1415 GMT in response to an attack by the militia on Israeli forces earlier in the day, police said.

An Israeli military spokesman confirmed the attack, which, he said, was in response to a mortar attack on Israeli positions, but he declined to give details.

Hizbollah said its forces attacked Israeli units an hour earlier near the central section of the "security zone" occupied by the Jewish state in South Lebanon since 1985.

The militia, which spearheads resistance to Israel's occupation of the buffer strip, said in a statement its forces caused "enemy casualties."

But a spokesman for the Israeli-backed South Lebanon Army (SLA) militia said there were no injuries after the Hizbollah attack. He added that Israeli artillery retaliated by targeting the source of the attack.

Lebanese police said around 60 shells landed near the villages of Jbaa, Humun and Jarjuh — opposite the central sector of the buffer strip.

A security service source said a woman was lightly injured by falling glass after an Israeli shell landed near her house at Jbaa, but he added that she did not require hospital treatment.

Israel has carried out eight other air raids on South Lebanon this year, which have wounded one Lebanese civilian and three guerrillas.